Vesak Day is one of the most important days for Buddhist all over the world, as it celebrates three important events – the Birth, Enlightenment and Passing Away (Mahaparinibbana) of Gautama Buddha.

While people imagine a celebration to be loud, the Bhikkhunis from Dhammasara led a silent meditation day on Friday 28 May for people to contemplate and meditate on the Buddha, His Teachings (Dhamma) and the joy his Birth and Enlightenment brought to our lives.

The people attending this silent meditation day were appreciative of having a day of total silence. They took this opportunity to calmly reflect on Vesak Day.

However, no Vesak Day celebration would be complete without bringing the whole Buddhist community together, young and old, new members and old faces.

On Sunday, 30th May, Vesak Day was celebrated in the usual joyful style at Dhammaloka Centre in Nollamara. The weather was kind and sunlight reigned in the skies.

Ajahn Brahm was in residence with Ajahn Brahmali, Ven. Pasadika, and Ven. Nitho while the Bhikkhuni Sangha was represented by Ajahn Vayama, Ven. Nirodha, Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna, who were accompanied by anagarikas Sally and Upekka.

The day began with the taking of the five and eight precepts, followed by Dana.

The place was livened up with beautifully adorned flowers in the halls and decorated coloured lanterns hung outside the meditation hall by Prem and his army of volunteers. These lanterns were decorated and prepared in the preceding week by a group of Dhamma Friends.

Later in the afternoon, Ajahn Brahm presided over the welcoming ceremony for new Buddhists, who took the three refuges and five precepts. He welcomed them with a short homily and a gift, followed by a short talk on the five precepts.

Later, the new Buddhists were invited to afternoon tea to meet the members of the Sangha and the rest of the Buddhist community.

Not to be left out, the children of the Dhamma School put on a concert, singing a selection of Buddhist hymns such as Angulimala and Vesak Dawn. Their performance would have made their parents very proud.

Later in the evening, a crowd gathered for the offering to the Triple Gem. The shrine hall was packed, with the crowd spilling out of the hall.

Ajahn Brahm reminded us of the meaning behind the ancient ceremony. After that, the eight preceptors took the offerings of flowers, incense, light and medicine to everyone gathered there so that all could share in the merits of the offering.

Once the offerings were made to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, the crowd gathered silently outside for the final event of the night, the procession to circumambulate three times around the Buddha Shrine setup in the park opposite Dhammaloka.
Everyone from the community were out to celebrate the Thai New Year

Over the last 30 years, the Thai-Australian Association of WA has taken responsibility for organizing significant events on the Thai calendar.

For Thais, the temple is at the centre of the celebration of festivals and so for the first time, with the generous support of the Buddhist Society of WA, Songkran was held at the Dhammaloka Centre in Nollamara.

Songkran is the traditional Thai New Year, celebrated over three days in mid April, the hottest and driest part of the year.

It typically begins with merit making by offering food to monks, releasing birds into the air and fish into streams and paying homage to one's elders, family and friends.

It remains an occasion when young men and women may begin courting and culminates with a procession of young women in beautiful costumes and the announcement of Miss Songkran.

Songkran is always associated with water as a symbol of cleansing and renewal. The blessing ranges from respectful pouring with scented water to the dousing and drenching of everyone in sight.

After much preparation, the day of celebration arrived on Saturday 17th April.

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Food stalls were set up in the parking area, as well as marquees being erected in the park for a program of entertainment that includes traditional dancing, the Miss Songkran pageant and a singing competition.

The event commenced with the traditional blessing from the monks and a formal opening ceremony with speeches by the Association President, Ms Saowarak Srisukkho, in the presence of government representatives and other dignitaries.

Around 700 visitors attended the event with many enjoying the delights of Thai cuisine, under the trees in the park, while watching the music and dance performances.

Of particular interest was the parade for Miss Songkran. Dressed in silk of various hues and adorned with gold jewellery, each of the eleven entrants looked striking as they made their entrance.

As Songkran is incomplete without a liberal drenching of water, a visit by members of the local fire brigade had been arranged.

While a dunking machine had received some interest and a respectful washing of hands had been visited on dignitaries, the arrival of the fire brigade heralded the real spirit of Songkran.

Children emerged from the spray of the fire hose with soaked clothes and a look of delight on their faces. It was clear that the New Year had arrived and the past had gone.
It has been an interesting start to the year for the Kalyana Mitta young adult group. Between fundraisers and meetings, we have certainly managed to keep ourselves out of mischief!

Our meetings underwent a recent change in format, now becoming a totally discussion based meeting, which has proven popular with our very diverse group members.

We have been very lucky to have Ajahn Brahm at many of our meetings and we have benefited from his teachings as well as entertained by his very colourful ghost stories. Who knows, maybe we will do as he suggested and host the next meeting in the cemetery!

In March, our very own Sam and Weng participated in the World’s Greatest Shave for the Leukaemia Foundation.

For a worthy cause, they shaved it all off in front of an audience at Dhammaloka with Ajahn Brahm in the role of the barber. There is no one better qualified when it comes to the bald look!

The pair raised an impressive $1048! A big thank you to all who supported them.

Mid April saw the arrival of our long-awaited Buddhist-themed movie night. It was a great success as many in the community came together to enjoy ‘The Little Buddha’ – an oldie but a goodie!

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Sentinels of the Street

By Elio Novello (published in Creatrix#8, March 2010)

The garbage bins in my street stand to attention on Monday morning. Dressed in uniform mission green, out there on parade, in neat rows – one metre from the kerb.

They stand perfectly still, straight back, proud posture. Perhaps not as attractive as those Dalek compost bins, (a sore point that causes some upset), but resolute nevertheless, in their resolve, to be sentinels of the street.

If garbage bins could talk, what stories they could tell -

Who in the street, under cover-of-darkness stealth, placed garbage in the neighbour’s bin the night before?

Who in the street is most wasteful?

Who puts batteries and household paint in their bin?

Who drinks too much alcohol? (the clink of bottles does them in)

Whose household is into kinky things?

No matter what the weather, the sentinels of the street stand to attention. Like worshippers at a Sunday service, they await deliverance to be lifted up on high - exultation via the garbage truck.

A ‘Gloria in Excelsis’ for the week’s work is done.

But the jubilation quickly subsides. The parade is dismissed. The sentinels return to their usual post with a deep emptiness inside.

Timely then for them to resume their work again.

Garbage bins give shelter to what we reject. They house what we disown. No discrimination or complaint, just simple acts of charity and love.
First BSWA Family Day Camp

By Gill Exton & Sue Tomlins

On Sunday, May 2nd, on a beautiful Autumn day, family groups met at Jorgenson Park in the hills of Kalamunda. There were about 70 of us. This was the first meeting of the group, whose purpose was to share the Dhamma and have lots of fun together as families. As an ice breaker, we played a game of musical chairs. As each player was out they introduced themselves. One of the parents said he was 13 years old! He certainly did not look it.

This article was written by Ajahn Brahm in April 2010 for publication in Inquiring Mind, a popular US Buddhist magazine.

Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen. Today on ABC TV (American Buddhist Channel) we present the final of “Who Wants to be Enlightened?”

This show is proudly sponsored by Samadhi Corporation Meditation Cushions, the only company that promises “If you’re not enlightened using our cushions in this life, we’ll give you your money back in your next life!”

Now, with a great pleasure that I am not attached to, I introduce our finalists: Ayya Anna Gami; Geshe Bo De’satta; Roshi Sid Arthur; and renowned American lay meditation teacher, psychotherapist and gay rights activist, Ms. Amy Tabha.

Please welcome them with a Sadhu, Om or a Mu!

For new viewers of the program, here are the rules again. There will be three elimination rounds where each of their holinesses will be tested on their achievement of Enlightenment.

One finalist will be eliminated and sent back to the source after each round. The first round is a question. Describe what Enlightenment means to you?

Anna: “Having no self. In fact, as the only Theravadin following the original teachings of the Buddha, I am the purest and most enlightened. I say that if you have realized no-self, then be proud and tell everyone!”

Bo: “Being so compassionate that I intentionally get angry at my disciples so that they don’t feel so miserably inferior in my presence.”

Sid: “Having no attachments. I am so detached that I am not even attached to detachment, hence my cool new Rolex. Awesome, isn’t it?”

Amy: “Having great sex without the delusion of a self that has to feel guilty about anything.”

Thank you, Your Emptiness, for your unfathomable wisdom. And the first off the wheel and off the show is…

Everyone then enjoyed a bush walk which was quite an adventure for some and enjoyed by all.

We were rewarded with a splendid morning tea before dividing into age groups for various activities: 3 groups for the children and a most thought-provoking session for the adults. The "oldies" were the last ones to finish. Say no more…..

A shared lunch was enjoyed in the sunshine followed by some informal games for those with energy to spare.

The main focus of the afternoon was an activity in which Mums, Dads and Kids collaborated to create a family collage.

All of us had such a great time at the family camp, we decided we needed another one. We came together at the end to share ideas for an overnight bush camp Nanga Mills, Dwellingup, in September.

And guess what? Look for news regarding the weekend family bush camp from 26 June on the BSWA website or registration counter.

We ended the fun and Dhamma enriching family camp by sharing an afternoon tea.

All our thanks to Ron Mutton and Lee Chew and a wonderful team of helpers. We are all looking forward to September.

Who wants to be Enlightened?

Anna! And don’t ever come back, Anna Gami.

The text for the second round is who can sit in meditation for the longest time. So, Your Ineffibles, after the gong, meditate! …GONGGG

After two minutes, Amy opens here eyes and checks her mobile for SMS’s. Sid lasts a whole hour. But Bo sits still for so long that the medics on the show decide he is dead and cremate him.

Bo, gone to suchness. A big round of “Om” sweet “Om” for Bo, please. Now, only Sid and Amy remain.

The final round, and isn’t this exciting, that will decide who is the winner of “Who Wants to be Enlightened?” Sid and Amy, I now want you to demonstrate on live TV a psychic power.

Sid closes his eyes, focuses deep within, and with a rush of piti (ecstacy) he floats up into the air like a feather on the breeze. Higher and higher Sid levitates above the stage until the awestruck audience bursts into thunderous applause.

So loud is their cheering that it interrupts Sid’s concentration, destroying his psychic power, and causing him to come crashing back down on the stage. Breaking his neck, he dies instantly.

Many in the audience gain Satori, Sid returns to the ground of all being, and a new koan is born.

With only one contestant remaining, Ms. Amy Tabha, famous lay meditation teacher, psychotherapist and environmental campaigner, is declared winner of “Who Wants to be Enlightened?” and presented with a special, limited edition, solid gold meditation cushion – hell to sit on, but impressive to look at – with GPS to navigate through and beyond all the hindrances.

She was the only one found wanting.

If this bit of fun destroys some reader’s craving to attain, or exposes the fraudulence of anyone who publicly claims to be Enlightened, or vacuums up some of the cultural dust that has covered up Enlightenment to the point of obfuscation, then it is well worth the writing.
Goddesses and Devas at Dhammasara

By Julienne van Loon

Long-time supporters of Dhammasara Nuns Monastery, Jacky Lambert and Pauline Shield, are regulars at the monthly Busy Bee. The two have become known as ‘Kitchen Goddesses’ for their efforts in making sure the urn is hot and the verandah area tidy. They see their role at the Busy Bee as looking after others who come to do the more physically demanding work.

“We used to be called the ‘Shoe Dragons’,” laughs Pauline. “I think that’s because of the ex-schoolteacher in me who is used to telling people what to do!” confesses Jacky. The atmosphere at a Dhammasara Busy Bee is very friendly, the two assure me. “I’ve helped a lot with planting trees over the years,” says Jacky, “but I’m beyond that now. These days people are often involved in clearing up after the trees to prepare for the bushfire season. Others have helped with garden seats, or to do painting.”

“At busy bees, we all go into the shrine room and take the blessings, as you would on any other day,” adds Pauline. “We share the meal. It’s all very congenial. I love going. You get that feeling of being very peaceful and of course you’re doing something to help which gives you a good feeling.”

Both Jacky and Pauline have been regularly supporting Dhammasara since the very early days, when Ajahn Vayama first moved to the block. They emphasise that supporting the monastery has always been a two-way street. In return for the offerings of food and services, both have received a great deal of guidance from the Sangha.

“I just couldn’t describe how much I’ve got from the relationship,” says Pauline. Jacky particularly encourages people who haven’t been to the monastery before to make the trip to offer Dana or to join a Busy Bee. “It’s very easy for people to get there – just out to Midland then straight up Toodyay Road. I know some people have a feeling they’re going beyond the black stump but it’s not that way at all. There’s always an opportunity to offer, you can always bring something or offer a service. The nuns give a talk about the Dhamma every day. Sometimes it is so appropriate to your own life that you think ‘Someone’s told them about me!’ That is apparently quite a common experience; the Dhamma is just so relevant to everyone. And after the Dana, there is always a chance to talk to the nuns directly and to reflect.”

“If you mention to someone that it’s the first time you’ve come, they will make you feel at ease,” assures Pauline. “My experience is that most people really enjoy it the first time and are happy to come back again.”

“People genuinely love it at Dhammasara,” says Jacky. “It’s such a welcoming atmosphere. Plus it’s an opportunity to see the natural bush. It’s done me a lot of good over the years to meet a whole range of people from different cultures and of different ages, too.”

Whether a Busy Bee or an ordinary day at the monastery, it is always a real family affair at Dhammasara. “Everyone has their role to play,” says Jacky. “There’s a very elderly lady who comes to the Busy Bee sometimes. She sits on the verandah while the younger members of her family get involved in the physical work. She sits there so peacefully. We’ve taken to calling her the ‘Verandah Deva.’”

Venerable Seri remembers warmly the wonderful help provided at a recent Busy Bee by Kusuma Wijayasekara, an elderly lady from Sri Lanka who is holidaying and staying with her son’s family in Perth. Kusuma helped most spontaneously, cleaning & attending to the balcony.

It seems that Devas and Goddesses are on the rise at our monastery in Gidgegannup... is there something in the air?
Ajahn Brahm's Travels

Ajahn Brahm has continued teaching in Perth, interstate and overseas. He has given many talks to the monks over the past months, often making it back from his travels in time to give the Wednesday evening Dhamma talk.

On evenings when he can't make it, Bhante Brahmläi has given a Sutta reading for the monks.

Every fortnight we have a visit from the Dhammasara Bhikkunhis who receive the “ovada”. This is a simple ceremony and basically gives the nuns a chance to hear Ajahn teach the Dhamma.

It is an inspiring sight to see the rows of monks and nuns (both sitting at the front), a row of novices, male and female anagârikas and lay men and women. It is truly a bourgeoning community.

In Perth, Ajahn Brahm has been busy attending a number of events. Another 9 day retreat was held at Jhana Grove in April with Ajahn leading a full house of old and new faces. Some of you are certified retreat addicts!

A celebration was held in the Supreme Court Gardens for the “Buddha’s Birthday”. This event was organised by our Mahayana friends and included an eclectic range of entertainments such as Irish and Cossack dancing.

In his ongoing work with the sick and dying, Ajahn Brahm spoke at a conference on palliative care. This was held at “Asia House” in Northbridge.

At the commonwealth day observance, held at St Georges cathedral, Ajahn continued to build bridges with leaders of other spiritual traditions.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was in town recently and met with Ajahn Brahm at a community leaders' gathering.

And finally, in Perth, Ajahn bolstered his reputation as an art critic, speaking at the opening of an exhibition at Curtin University on the theme of nanotechnology art. Wonders never cease.

Elsewhere in Australia, Ajahn attended the Annual Mitra conference in Sydney. While there he also gave public talks, one of which was attended by more than 900 people.

In Melbourne he spent 5 days with the Buddhist Society of Victoria to lead the Vesak celebration, and give several talks.

Overseas he celebrated Chinese New Year with a tour of Malaysia. Another visit to our northern neighbour, Indonesia, had Ajahn Brahm criss-crossing its islands. He gave talks in Jakarta, Padang, Pekanbaru, Makassar, Bandang and Samindra. He has also been stopping over to criss-crossing its islands. He gave talks in Jakarta, Padang, Pekanbaru, Makassar, Bandang and Samindra. He has also been stopping over to criss-crossing its islands. He gave talks in Jakarta, Padang, Pekanbaru, Makassar, Bandang and Samindra. He has also been stopping over to

give talks in Singapore on his way to other destinations.

Comings and Goings

The usual ebb and flow of monks, in and out of the monastery, saw several monks leave and new community members join us.

It is encouraging that though some monks have gone to other monasteries, none have disrobed for quite some time.

Venerable Lakkhana left to stay at Na Uyana Monastery in Sri Lanka.

After the sudden death of his sister he felt it important to be near his mother. On a positive note, he is now one of two Bodhinyana monks there.

Venerable Vimokkha is still living there having left Bodhinyana over a year ago. He came to visit us and his family for a short time in March.

Ajahn Cittapalo is in Germany, his country of origin. His plan is to stay at Ajahn Cattamalo's monastery. The two brothers are sure to be a good team!

Ajahn Cittapalo has handed down his extensive knowledge of our plumbing and reticulation systems to other members of the community, and the Guest Monk duties have passed on to Ven Santutthi.

There is a definite Burmese theme in the monastery. Ven Abhayaratana, a Canadian monk ordained by Bhante Gunaratana, returned to U Tejaniya's monastery in Burma after a year in Bodhinyana. He has confirmed his return to Bodhinyana in March 2011, to stay for at least two years.

Ven Buddhharakkhita, with past experience as a monk in Burma, ordained as a samanera in March, and Ven Jaganatha arrived from Sydney, having previously practiced at Pa Auk Sayadaw's large monastic institution and Santi Forest Monastery in NSW. He intends to stay on indefinitely.

In Anāgarika land, we have two new recruits. Nicholas, a Swiss man, was ordained in May. By trade a primary school teacher, we look forward to him calming the child in all of us.

Peter, from Finland, was ordained on the 3rd of June. With skills as both a chef and an engineer we should be able to find plenty of jobs for him. The only trouble with these European anagârikas is teaching them to drive on the left side of the road!

Our workshop master, Ven Santutthi, returned from Wat Buddha Dhamma. WBD is an old forest monastery in Wiseman’s Ferry, north of Sydney.

Our old friend Ajahn Khemavaro is rehabilitating the Wat, and Santutthi helped with the maintenance of the old huts and buildings.

The other side of the balance sheet sees Bodhinyana’s secretary, Ven Pasadika, going to live with Ajahn Khema. A whiz in the office, he will surely be an asset Ajahn Khema will want to hold on to.

Your author, Ven Jhanarato, is taking over as monastery secretary. And our old friend Ajahn Dhammarato dropped in for a few days.

Buildings

Two huts have been under renovation over the past few months. Both have had concrete ceilings poured with a space for rats, snakes and lizards to play without disturbing the meditator below. One hut is complete, with the other to be finished shortly.

On the Southern boundary of the monastery, our old friend Norm has now completed concreting the surface of another section of the firebreak. These paths are crucial during any emergency such as bush fire. The southern boundary fire break extends down to the large third dam, allowing fire trucks to refill.

The workshop roof has been fitted with an array of solar panels, for generating electricity. The power supplied either goes to be used in the monastery or fed back into the grid. We are certainly keeping our green credentials.

Several huts have had screen doors installed, allowing the huts to cool during the summer months. Prior to this we were reliant on small windows to give a breeze, so to be able to leave the door open is a blessing.

Our library has had a new and very beautiful ‘monk-made’ Jarrah computer desk installed. A computer has been donated by Venerable Cunda. The workstation is now in use by the librarian, the Dhamma talk editor and for monks and anagârikas who wish to copy talks onto listening devices.
Community

The day to day management of the monastery is now being carried out by Ven. Nirodha, Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna as a group.

Ajahn Vayama will concentrate on representing the monastery on the Committee of BSWA.

Samaneri Nissara from Nirodharam Vipassana Centre, Chiang Mai, Thailand visited and spent one week at Dhammasara from 25th April to 3rd May.

The Bhikkhuni Sangha of Dhammasara decided on 28th April 2010 that we have to have a policy of not considering as suitable for samaneri or bhikkhuni ordination, candidates who have a chronic illness that requires ongoing medical or surgical treatment.

The monastery is unable to take on the financial and physical responsibilities in our current circumstances.

Anagarikaa Clare Holst left the monastery on 6th May. We wish her well on her continued path of practice.

In April, the brick path between the Nuns Cottage and the Abbot’s kuti as well as the railing on the entry stairs at the Nuns Cottage was completed.

Due to illnesses and available nun power at the monastery, we contracted our supporter, a professional painter, to paint the wooden beams under the verandah, and doors at the Nuns Cottage.

She also painted the doors at the older kutis.

Vesak Meditation Day

The Vesak Meditation Day was conducted by the three bhikkhunis from Dhammasara, Ven. Nirodha, Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna at Dhammaloka on the full moon of Vesak, Friday 28th May.

About 100 people joined in a day of practice in noble silence to honour the birth, enlightenment and Mahaparinibbana of the Lord Buddha.

Vesak Celebration at Dhammaloka

The four bhikkhunis and two anagarikkaas attended the Vesak celebration at Dhammaloka on Sunday, 30th May.

Busy Bee

Several successful busy bees have been held at the monastery over the past few months.

At the last busy bee before the rains which was held on 16th May, the photographer from BSWA, Michael came to take photos.

We also requested Michael to take some group photos of our die-hard busy bee fans (They were here at almost every busy bee!) including our long serving goddesses and devas.

There was plenty of laughter and fun and lots of good kamma was generated and shared.

If you wish to join in the fun, unfortunately you will need to wait till after the Rains Retreat for the next busy bee in December.

However, if you are keen on helping, you are invited to come along to the clean-up after the Entry to the Rains Ceremony on Sunday, 18th July and the End of the Rains Ceremony on Saturday, 30th October. (Please don’t forget to come to the ceremonies beforehand!).

There should be plenty of work for you to make lots of good kamma and fun too!

Entry to Rains Ceremony

The first Entry to Rains Ceremony for the bhikkhuni sangha at Dhammasara will be held on Sunday, 18th July 2010.

Everyone is invited to come to wish the bhikkhunis well for their first rains as a bhikkhuni sangha and offer your support to the community.

Please arrive from 9am for 10am start. Do not miss out on the beautiful bush walk after dana!

Announcement

Those who have visited Dhammasara Nuns Monastery over the past year have seen the abbot, Ajahn Vayama, decline in health, to the extent that she has given many of her duties over to the other bhikkhunis.

Now, performing her remaining responsibilities for Dhammasara is more than she can manage.

Consequently, Ajahn Vayama has decided to formally resign her position of abbot and spend the next five months away from Dhammasara in a supporter’s house in Perth with absolutely no teaching or management duties.

She will be accompanied by Venerable Seri who will take good care of her teacher.

During their absence, Dhammasara Nuns Monastery will be operating as usual in the capable hands of Venerables Nirodha and Hassapanna.

At the end of the Rains Retreat in five months time, Ajahn Vayama will reassess the situation.

Ajahn Vayama will not be available during this period, and daily dana to her and Venerable Seri will be offered by prior arrangement only.

Please phone Venerable Seri after 1st July to make arrangements. Another way you can offer support at this time is to make donations to Dhammasara Nuns Monastery Expense Account, specified for Ajahn Vayama and Venerable Seri’s maintenance costs.

In this way we can provide Ajahn Vayama with the totally stress free environment that is most conducive to her health.

Yours Sincerely,
Ajahn Vayama
With Jhana Grove entering its second year of operation, much of the initial teething problems have been solved.

While much needs to be done, the centre already provides a comfortable, conducive environment for meditation.

Several retreats have been held over recent months. Ajahn Brahm taught the 9 day Easter retreat, with Ajahn Cittapalo looking after a weekend retreat.

Perth Insight Meditation Group is also running events there. When no formal retreat is being held, many lay men and women are taking self-retreats. The retreat centre is almost always in use.

Plumbing is always a weighty matter at Jhana Grove. Ber Sun's husband Sam deserves a big thank you for helping out with a number of small jobs.

Work has been done to clear one of the major drains – it held up well during a recent dousing. Erosion is always a problem, and new “fixes” are being put in place here and there. This work is being led by our old friend Carl from Karnet prison, working 2-3 days a week.

Also, a diligent, keen (and clean!) crew, led by Prem Mirihagalla, worked to clean out the water tanks.

Work extending our concrete roads continues. Two firebreaks were paved and a ramp laid between cottage number 6 and the meditation hall.

Other landscaping work includes planting and weed eradication on the property. The Karnet boys are again helping with this. Mr Morozumi of Japanese Landscaping began the next stage of landscaping and planting at the end of May.

Our difficulties with the floor are being tackled. Some boards in the dining hall have expanded and buckled due to moisture. This has been repaired now and Jorge from JPC Flooring from Mandurah did an excellent job. He has kindly offered to sand back and re-seal the entire floor, free of charge. Anumodana!

Other work includes new solar electricity panels on the kitchen roof, a second clothesline, a new panel of hooks for hanging coats and umbrellas, and a scarecrow.

If anyone has ideas on how to stop crows and other birds from attacking the glass and pooping all over the concrete, please call the caretakers on 9525 3314.

To help with all this work, a new workshop has been fitted with a bench and tools. We give many thanks to Mike, Dania and Bianca for donating tools, and to those who have given hardware store vouchers.

Much of this credit went towards the fit-out.

The next major project is the Teacher's Cottage. A submission is currently with the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale.

Finally, we welcome Mike and Dania Percy, the new caretakers at Jhana Grove, Welcome!

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**A Case for Voluntary Euthanasia**

*By Ajahn Brahm*

To see a loved one with a terminal disease in chronic pain or in constant emotional distress is one of the most difficult situations to bear.

Modern palliative care can help, but it is often not good enough. Many powerful painkillers dull the mental faculties to such an extent that only a faint shadow of the person remains.

There is no quality of life. Many argue that if it were a loved cat or dog then they would be put down, so why can’t they do the same with a dear family member?

Is euthanasia compassion or murder?

In my opinion, euthanasia in the form of giving a lethal injection to end a loved one's suffering is still killing.

The one who gives the injection breaks the 1° moral precept of Buddhism. The karma is likely to be far less than most other forms of killing, because the motive is largely compassionate.

The danger is that in such a crisis of love, it is almost impossible to be totally clear about one's motives. It might be that one is not putting the suffering relative out of their misery, but that one is putting them out of one's own misery!

The suffering that one is ending is one's own, not that of the terminal relative.

Nevertheless, such acts of euthanasia shouldn't be a crime. Instances of abortion in desperate circumstances, such as fetal deformity, are not regarded as a crime.

So why shouldn't euthanasia, in compassionate circumstances, be regarded as a crime? The law is inconsistent here and needs to be amended.

Another option is Voluntary Euthanasia. This differs from the above form of euthanasia in that it gives the power of life or death to the person with the terminal disease. No one else kills them. They themselves choose and act on their choice to die.

A typical method is for the terminally ill person to pass psychological and medical assessment first, and then be connected to an intravenous drip into which can be added lethal drugs.

The insertion of the killer drugs is totally controlled by the person with the terminal disease through a touch sensitive computer screen. There are questions that ensure that they are in full possession of their mental faculties, have considered the matter thoroughly, and that they are clear about the consequences of what they are about to do.

The procedure includes many options to stop the process. They are in full control. No one kills them, but they freely choose to die. This is why it is called “voluntary” euthanasia.

Suicide is not included in the 1° moral precept of Buddhism, therefore voluntary euthanasia does not break this precept. It is also likely to be karmically neutral, because the motive has been thoroughly investigated to be pure.

Moreover, it returns the choice of life or death back to the person with the terminal disease. We are each the owner of our karma. It must be our responsibility, our choice not another's.

To Buddhists who deny the existence of a creator God, it is an affront to call this “playing God”. As Buddhists we take personal responsibility.

Our decisions about our own life or death must be our free choice, our karma. The effect that our actions have on others should always be part of the careful considerations prior to taking such a life ending decision.

One of those effects will be to hand moral responsibility back to the individual and away from dogmatic religious leaders and lawyers.
Ajahn Brahmali discusses the meaning of Vesak Day

An interview with Julienne van Loon.

JvL: What does the word ‘Vesak’ mean?
AB: Vesak is the name of a month just like January or February. In ancient India the calendar year was divided into twelve months, just like our calendar year. And the second month was named Vesak and that is where the name comes from.

In Indian tradition each month ends on a full moon, on a Puja day. So that is the actual Vesak Day; it is the full moon day of the Vesak month.

JvL: Why does the exact date of Vesak vary from year to year and with different traditions?
AB: Again, this is because in ancient India the year is based on the lunar calendar. Just like Easter, it varies from year to year. The number of full moons in the year doesn’t exactly match with the solar calendar.

The lunar calendar is, I think, eleven days shorter than a solar one, so each year the Vesak comes eleven days earlier than it did the year before, until it goes into the previous month, then you add a month. Then it shifts forward to, in our case, May once more. So this is how it works.

You ask about different traditions, and I must admit I don’t know much about the different traditions. Some of the other groups, particularly the Chinese tradition, follow the Chinese calendar, and so you may see some groups celebrate Vesak at a slightly different time.

JvL: What should we lay Buddhists reflect upon, on Vesak Day?
AB: Well, first of all, I think that whether you’re a lay Buddhist or whether you’re a monastic, the thing that you reflect upon is roughly the same.

There’s not any major difference there because the fact is that the Buddhist path is the same for lay people as for monastics. It varies of course, depending on what sort of commitment you have to the path, but it is roughly the same.

The whole purpose of Vesak is obviously the recollection of the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha, and because of that it’s a celebration of the Buddha himself.

So what you should do is try to recall the Buddha. This is what it’s all about.

The sort of thing that you should recall is your connection to the Buddha. Who was this person? The more you have a connection with the Buddha, the more connected you feel to Buddhism as a religion or a way of life.

So the Dhamma and your practice come together when you have a connection to the Buddha.

One of the reflections that I do is to think about two aspects of the Buddha. That is, his wisdom, and his compassion.

The wisdom aspect of the Buddha is basically his understanding of suffering and happiness in the world. I always regard wisdom as almost like intelligence, but it’s intelligence in a very specific area, the area of human psychology.

So it is to do with the question of what makes you happy or what makes you unhappy. The Buddha had the highest possible understanding of human happiness and suffering, all the way to the complete end of suffering.

That is why he is wise, because of that particular understanding.

With the compassion aspect of the Buddha, one of the reflections I do is to recall that after his enlightenment, his own reason for interacting with the world was out of compassion for other beings.

He had finished his work, he had done what he had to do, he didn’t have any more suffering. He could have just sat and meditated and blissed out, you know, but instead of doing that he went out into the world, and everything he did then was out of compassion.

That is why he taught. You know when you think about these things, it’s very beautiful. He had this beautiful combination of compassion and wisdom. And that is, of course, a very powerful thing.

One of the other things you might do on Vesak Day is consider more closely one of the chants that we do regularly, which is actually called “Recollection of the Buddha” (reprinted below).

This is the standard recollection of the Buddha recommended in the Suttas. It lists the qualities of the Buddha. If you know that chant, and you know what it means in English, that is another way of reflecting on the Buddha on Vesak Day.

A lot of the meaning there comes back to what I have already said about the compassion and wisdom aspects.

JvL: Has your own understanding and experience of Vesak Day changed over time?
AB: Yes it has, and I think the main thing that has changed is my appreciation of the Buddha as a person. I think when many of us first come to Buddhism, the Buddha is a distant figure for us.

First of all, he was an Enlightened Being, and we don’t always understand what that means at first.

Secondly, he lived over two and a half thousand years ago. And as he was in India, he is perhaps also culturally far away. All of these things make him a very distant figure.
although this can be a problem in that it is sometimes exploited by
Another common custom is releasing animals on Vesak Day
thing to do.
I understand that in places like Sri Lanka it is the tradition to make
but in fact we should always try to do this sort of thing. It's a terrific
might like to make an extra effort to do this on a day like Vesak Day,
this is appropriate?
AB: Yes, of course it is appropriate. It is part of Buddhist charity. We
might like to make an extra effort to do this on a day like Vesak Day,
but in fact we should always try to do this sort of thing. It's a terrific
thing to do.
I understand that in places like Sri Lanka it is the tradition to make
offerings to the monastery or to the needy on Vesak Day.
Another common custom is releasing animals on Vesak Day
although this can be a problem in that it is sometimes exploited by
dodgy merchants who trap animals on purpose and so forth. But in
general, the principle of generosity, at any time, is a good one.

Recollection of the Buddha
The following verses, in Pali, relate to the nine intrinsic virtues of the
Buddha:
Itipito bhavaanaraha'm sammaas-sambuddho
Vijja-carana-sampanno sugato lokatiddu
Anuttaro purisa-damma-saarathi sattha deva-manussana'm
buddho bhagavaan
Tamaha'm bhagavanta'm abhipuujayami
Tamaha'm bhagavanta'm siraasaa namaami

The English translation is as follows:
He, the Blessed One, is indeed the Noble Lord, the Perfectly
Enlightened One;
He is impeccable in conduct and understanding, the Serene One,
the Knower of the Worlds;
He trains perfectly those who wish to be trained; he is Teacher of
gods and men; he is Awake and Holy.
I chant my praise to the Blessed One, I bow my head to the
Blessed One.

President’s Report
Life is certainly very full as President of the BSWA. The past quarter has
been eventful and in many ways very satisfying.
We have been very fortunate to have Victoria McClafferty step up and take
over the running of the library. She took over from Susan who resigned
after more than a year of dedicated work and improvement in the library.
Vicki is being ably assisted by Brian. The new library team has already had
ideas meeting and are getting things in place to keep our library operating
effectively, with some new ideas and new ways of presenting the Dhamma.
Vicki is gradually getting hold of the reins and is to be congratulated for her
efforts.
Our committee man Ron Mutton and our BSWA volunteers have organized a family
day camp which was very successful and well received by the participants.
It will become a prototype for a longer weekend family camp, which Ron is
also deeply involved in organizing.
Our first family weekend camp will be held on 10th – 12th September, in 80
acres of beautiful forest near the Murray River, 110k from Perth where
wonderful outdoor activity will await the participants.
There will be great opportunities for learning and experiencing family
community living as Buddhist people. Details are available from Ron and at
our centre.
Ron is also organizing what he calls an All-Of-Life practice group, especially
to support people who have just taken 5 precepts or are thinking of doing so.
The group will discuss all aspects of how to live a good Buddhist lay life.
The people who will be leading this group initially are past President Rachel Green
and long time member Eric Williams.
It is with regret that we had to say goodbye to Clive, our committee man, who
recently resigned. Clive has been diligently and very effectively looking after
our sound systems and recordings for the past 2 years. He will be missed.
One of our members, Marilyn Metta has started a support group for people
who have anxiety, depression, chronic pain or everyday stress problems.
Marilyn is a clinical Psychologist and will operate in the group as a facilitator. It
is a small group with a fixed life time period of five weeks. The groups will
have six to eight people and will focus on basic skills and different ways to
incorporate Loving-Kindness (Metta) into everyday life.
She will run further groups if there is interest and if the initial group is
successful. If you are interested in knowing more about these groups, please let
me or Marilyn know.
Dhammaloka was a venue to celebrate the Thai Songkran water festival. This
event was run twice, one organized by our own centre and the other by the
Thai Australia Association.
The event organized by our group went off very well. Many thanks to all
involved.
On the week following our own festival day, the Thai Australia Association
used our facilities to run their own Songkran festival event. It was very
successful with good exposure for the BSWA to many politicians and
dignitaries.
If the Thai Australia Association decides to use our centre again next year, I will
make sure we advertise it more strongly to our own members.
This year’s Vesak Day cycle started with, Ajahn Brahm and the Bhikkuni’s from
Dhammasara being invited to take part in the big Buddha’s Birthday event at
the Supreme Court Gardens.
It was run by the Temple in Maryland. It was a truly spectacular event. I left
Ajahn Brahm at the end of the night with a great line of people waiting to get a
photo with him. He is one of Buddhism’s greatest ambassadors.
Our own Vesak day was on 30th May. Many people have said to me it was our
best yet! Certainly the organizers were really pleased with all the help they
received.
To organize a day like this takes a lot of effort. There is the organization and
making of the lanterns, then the ceremony for new Buddhists, the children’s
concert, the circumambulation and the many other activities that go to make up
Vesak day.
I would like to single out our events committee person, Sue Lee who put in an
enormous effort, and our regular hard working volunteer Prem.
How fortunate we are to have people of this caliber involved in our centre.

By BSWA President Dennis Sheppard
Letters to the Editor

The Buddhist Flag

by Buddhadasa Abeyasingwardane

Exactly 125 years ago, the Buddhist flag as it is known today, was first raised on the Bukh Full Moon day on the 26th of April 1885. Prior to that, there was no Buddhist flag that the Buddhists all over the world used.

In the year 1882, a group of Buddhists known as the Colombo Group first conceived the idea of having a Buddhist flag to be hoisted at ceremonies and Buddhist Occasion days.

However, for two years they could not agree to the many proposals that were put to them about the shape and formation of the Buddhist flag.

Then they realized that in Buddhist literature, it was mentioned that the Buddha's aura emanated six colours namely: Nila (blue), Pita (yellow), Lohita (crimson), Odata (white), Manjesta (tawny), and Pabassara (a mixture of all five said colours).

Thus, they planned to have the flag with these colours and the formation was finally evolved as seen today.

Incidentally, at this time the European Rulers of South East Asian countries did not accept Buddhism as a religion for the majority of people in these colonies!

With the influence of English Educated Colonial people, the British Rulers were willing to accept Buddhism as an important religion in the colonies.

Furthermore, a well known American Buddhist Educator named Colonel Henry Steel Olcott stepped in and requested the British Rulers to declare Vesak Day as a national holiday, which they agreed.

This news was received by the Colombo Group a few weeks before the full moon day of the month of May and to express their appreciation they hoisted the first Buddhist flag on the full moon day of the month of April 1885 (The Bukh Full Moon Day) at Dipaduttaramaya temple in Colombo in Sri Lanka.

On the Vesak day of 1885, Anagarika Dharmapala, the founding president of the Mhabodi Society, got a flag from the Colombo Group and hoisted it in Bodhgaya - the place where Siddharta Goutama became Samma Sambuddha over 24 centuries earlier.

In 1889, Anagarika Dharmapala and Col. Olcott took a flag to Japan. Before the end of the century, the flag was introduced to Burma, Korea, China and many other countries.

In 1950, the World Fellowship of Buddhist (W.F.B.) first held their meeting in Kandy, Sri Lanka which was attended by 29 different country members.

The President elect of W.F.B., Prof. G. P. Malalasekera, proposed that the Buddhist flag be accepted as the universal symbol of Buddhists to be hoisted at Buddhist Occasions. This was accepted unanimously by the W.F.B. members.

So today we have the Buddhist flag, our symbol of Buddhist unity.

Meaning of the Flag by Jaipal Singh

The Buddhist flag, is a symbol of faith, peace and unity of all Buddhists throughout the world. The six colours of the flag signify:

1. Blue: The concept of loving kindness and peace in Buddhism.
2. Yellow: The Middle Way which avoids all extremes and brings balance and liberation.
3. Crimson (Red): The blessings that practising the Buddha's teaching brings.
4. White: Purity of the Buddha's teaching and the emancipation it brings, the Dhamma will always exist regardless of time or space.
5. Tawny (Orange): The essence of Buddhism, which is full of wisdom, strength and dignity.
6. Pabassara (a mixture of all five colours): The universality of the Truth of the Buddha's Teaching.

The horizontal stripes signify the races of the world living in peace and harmony while the vertical stripes signify eternal world peace.

The Buddhist flag implies that all sentient beings, regardless of race, nationality or skin colour, possess the Buddha Nature and have the potential to become a Buddha.

The Buddhist Council of W.A. has come up with the Buddhist Flag Lapel Pin which can be purchased from the BSWA library.

This is a fund raiser for the Vihara.

So do rush in to get it and wear it.
Upcoming Activities

Dhammaloka

- Chanting, Guided Meditation and Dhamma Talk - Every Friday, 7pm-9pm.
- Beginner's Meditation Class - Every Saturday, classes start 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
- 5 Nov - 14 Nov - Ajahn Brahm

Weekend Retreats
- 10 December - 12 December

Entry Into Rains Retreat

The Rains Retreat is an honoured tradition from the time of the Buddha. During this time, the Sangha retreats from the outside world for 3 months and devote their time to formal practice. The start of the Rains Retreat is as follows:

- Bodhinyana (Monks) Monastery - 25 July 2010
- Dhammasara (Nuns) Monastery - 18 July 2010

Family Day Camp

Families will get together for a weekend outing at Nanga Bush Camp, Dwellingup (110 km from Perth) from 10-12 September 2010. The setting is in 80 acres of beautiful forest in simple bush chalets. 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. Families should not miss this opportunity to have a great time and learn more of the Buddhist path with other like minded people. Details and registration forms will be available from 25 June on the BSWA website and the reception desk. For registration and more details, contact Ron Mutton (clients@bswa.org).

The activities are correct at time of printing. Some activity 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.