



Varapunya Bulletin

Helping hand, Healing hearts

ปีที่ ๓/๒๕๖๑ : ธันวาคม - Year 3/2018 : December

Varapunya Buddhist Society – Autumn News 2018

The Bulletin aims to keep everyone informed of what the Centre is doing in the way of activities, outreach, developments, the Kathina ceremony and what's in the calendar to watch out for.

The Centre has become very busy in its local activities and outreach over the summer and into the autumn. One of the objectives of the Centre is to provide opportunities to learn and explore Buddhism and Buddhist teaching and practice at the Centre. Each year the Centre has conducted temporary novice ordination and retreat for those who are interested in experiencing monastic life. This year, Norman and Lucy took the ordination on 15th August, for two weeks. The day was very special with the presence of the Most Venerable Phra Rajwithetpanyakhun (Dr Laow) who came to Aberdeen to ordain them. Their daily programme was morning chanting at 6 am, studying Buddhist scriptures, practicing meditation and participating in the alms round. It was an opportunity for members of the lay community to offer dana and to join in with other meritorious activities at the Centre.



The Centre has two toilets, one upstairs and one off the 'living room'. It has always been an awkward situation and an additional toilet, accessible internally and externally, has been the most pressing need. In response, the Centre organised a Phapah Fund raising ceremony on 2nd September together with a celebration of the 2nd anniversary of new Centre. With support from local members, different parts of the UK, Thailand, Austria, Jersey and Ireland, we were able to announce that £24,000 had been raised for this cause. On behalf of the Centre special thanks go to Ajahn Wichian from Thailand and to everyone who supports the Centre. The next stage is to progress the construction by securing competitive quotes, selecting a contractor who can do the work for an acceptable price and start on site as soon as possible.

The Centre offers Mindfulness Meditation sessions in several locations across the city in a partnership with the NHS Social Partnership and Multi-Cultural Forum. On the last Monday of each month, for the last couple of years, we have offered lunch-time Mindfulness Monday sessions for the general public and for NHS/ACC staff. It seems this will continue into 2019. This led us to also develop a 6 week public course (one hour per session) which we have now run twice at the CREDO centre in John Street, Aberdeen. The second course ended on 28th October with an afternoon event at our own Centre involving longer discussion and meditation practice. From these two courses we are trialling a monthly support group for those participants who now wish to continue with their mindfulness meditation practice.

Meanwhile, the Centre also offers mindfulness meditation sessions 'on demand' and a number of members have supported these, including at the NHS Len Ironside Centre and at the City Hospital.

One of the benefits of offering these events is that we reach many more people than we can currently hope to do at the Centre itself. However to continue to develop this 'outreach' we need more, suitable volunteers who would be taught how to instruct mindfulness meditation to others. If you are interested please let me know.

The Centre also works with other organisations in the area and other parts of the country. Apart from being actively involved with the local Aberdeen 'Human Library' event, the Aberdeen Interfaith and other religious groups, the Centre has extended its relationship with other Buddhist groups in the UK. On 28-30 September, under the leadership of Ajahn Sujana, five members of community went to Staffordshire to attend and support the Interfaith Conference at Wat Mahathat UK temple. On that tour, members visited Wat PhraSing in Runcorn, Wat Phrasiratanaram in Manchester and Dhamma Talaria Peace Pagoda in Birmingham.

Those who have been at the Centre during the year will have noticed (and maybe participated in) the tree planting in the fields that took place during spring and summer as part of our development of meditation grounds. This was continued into the autumn and there will be further planting of various bushes and plants in the next spring. The current plan for development is on the notice board inside the Centre. The intention is also to plant a small number of fruit trees and **anyone interested in sponsoring a tree should contact Bruce who has been leading on the 'planting project'**.

Also the monthly Sunday School for children has proved most popular and we plan to further develop this although we are again limited by space.

The Kathina ceremony is a traditional festival of robe offering to the venerable monks, which is one of the few events where the monastic and lay community work together. The lay community are often not able to attend other monastic ceremonies. This ceremony also places great importance on communal effort and appreciation. The annual Kathina for the Centre was on Sunday 28th October at the Copthorne Hotel. The main Kathina Robe was sponsored by David and Lena Briggs and Jackie. It was a successful event with morning chanting followed by guided meditation, the offering alms round and lunch. After lunch, there was informal talk and blessing chanting before the official offering of the Robe. The ceremony ended with further guided meditation and the practice of loving kindness. Around 60 people attended on the day. On 1st November the monks went to London to attend the first ever Kathina ceremony at the London Mindfulness Meditation Centre.

On a more practical level, the cottage and its surroundings need constant attention. Despite repeated remedial work on the gable end and the chimney/roof, we are still experiencing internal dampness around the fire place and this will need further examination. Fortunately the dampness around one of the windows was resolved by simply lowering the external ground level! The new oil tank and related work has now been installed successfully and the garden has been extended to the eastern boundary wall.

Ajahn Sujana will be away most of November but one or more visiting monks will be at the Centre. During November therefore everyone is welcome to attend the evening and weekend meditation and to give food dana but it is unlikely there will be guidance or teaching. In December, the monks are on retreat so the Centre is closed apart from weekend (Saturday and Sunday) morning practice sessions. Again everyone is welcome to attend the weekend morning practice.

These dates are for your diary and you are invited to join in:

- There will be a New Year's Eve evening service at the centre starting at 9pm and ending around 1am on New Year's morning. On 1st January, everyone is invited to participate in alms-offering in the morning as a part of blessing for good new year.
- On 13th January, we will have a Remembrance Day service at the Centre. The day begins with chanting, meditation and alms offering. In the afternoon, there will be a ceremony dedicating merits to our departed loved ones.

Meditation and Buddhist studies Classes at the centre:

1. Tuesday Evening: 7 – 9 pm. guided meditation and end with discussions.
2. Wednesday Evening: 7 - 9 pm ; good for beginners
3. Sunday Morning session 10:00 am -11:15 am (everyone is welcome)
4. Friday Dhamma studies at 7 pm (This is only for old students)

The Centre provides all services and classes are free. The centre intends to assist finding everyone's true self, which is priceless. Therefore, the centre provides classes and services free. To provide such valuable services the centre needs your support in different ways. It runs entirely from donation. If you are willing to support please send your donation to the centre or **to the HSBC Bank 'Varapunya Meditation Centre' Sort Code: 40-01-25 Account No: 8139-2948**

Finally, this year's Kathina Ceremony will be on Sunday 30th October 2016. I cordially invite everyone to join the centre to celebrate and raise fund to support the centre.

May the protective power of the triple gem; the Buddha, the dhamma and the sangha bring you a happy and successful life and finally attain the ultimate happiness of Nibbana.

<p>Contact: Varapunya Meditation Centre, 92 Constitution Street, Aberdeen, AB24 5EX, Scotland email: varapunya@gmail.com http://varapunyabuddhistsociety.org <i>Charity Reg. No. SC043989</i></p>
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