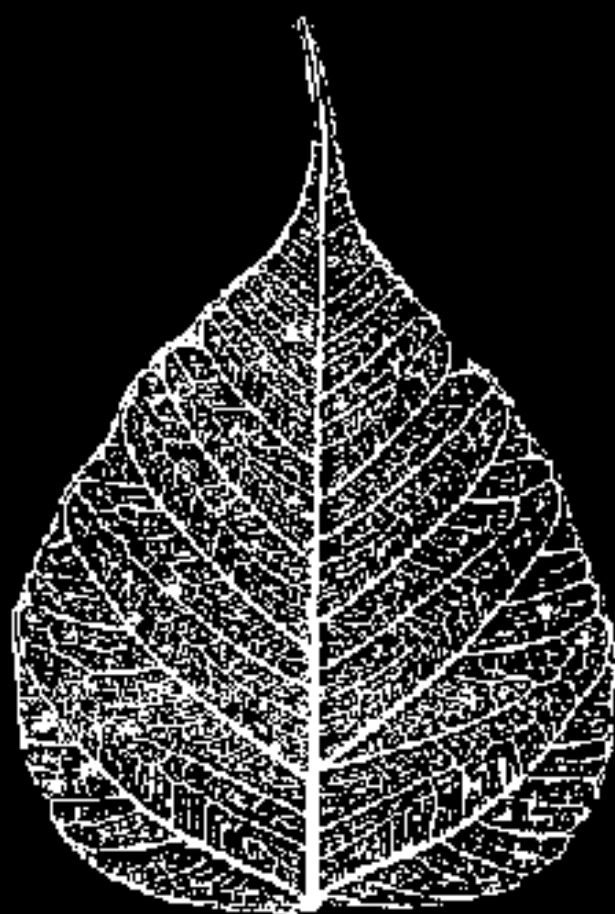


BODHI LEAF



**WAT
BUDDHA
DHAMMA**

**FOREST HERMITAGE
RETREAT CENTRE
VILLAGE**

**AUG 1999 – 2542
VOL. 21 NO. 3**



Reflections on the Dhamma

Practising the Dhamma

Learning without practising will not bring us much benefit. Therefore we must practise as well. To practise well, one should establish oneself according to the Buddhist principles. One should observe at least the Five Precepts because this is the basic training for those who follow the Buddha's teachings. We believe that there are two kinds of forces or powers in the mind: positive and negative. We only have one mind and our mind only has room for only one kind of force. So, if the negative forces arise, then there will not be any room for positive forces to arise. This is why we should establish good principles within ourselves.

These are the good laws of Nature. We have no right to harm or hurt any living beings nor do we have the right to steal the possessions belonging to another. We also have no right to harm their wives, children or husbands. We also should not lie or deceive another. Also, we are not supposed to cause trouble to ourselves through drinking intoxicants. We may think that we have the right to drink but this sort of practice is the way to carelessness and trouble. It is not right to bring trouble to ourselves and then spread such troubles to others.

Reflections on a Beach

Whenever I have a chance, I always like to walk along the beach. No, I am not a sun or sand lover, but it is the cool and fresh breeze that attracts me most. It cools down not only my physical body, but also my whole spirit. It allows me to think of some aspects of the Buddha's teaching, especially about loving-kindness.

If we are kind and gentle to each other like the sea breeze, the polluted atmosphere of anger and hatred will certainly be blown away. Just like the sea breeze, loving-kindness knows no barriers. It can visit any place. It spreads far and wide, giving only a kind comfortable feeling to any person it may meet without expecting anything in return. How wonderful it would be, to become a sea breeze.

Sitting back on the sand I really enjoy watching the waves that hit the shores one after another. If the rocks on the beach were not strong enough, they would have been damaged and broken to pieces a long time ago. I wish my mind would be that strong, so that I shall be able to bear all kinds of changes: loss and gain, suffering and happiness.

So far, I have survived many waves but I am afraid that the most frightening and powerful one is yet to come. Until then, hopefully, my patience and practice of the Buddha's teachings will be strong enough to meet any challenge!

While lying back on the beach, it is very pleasant to see white clouds floating gently by. No one has made any attempts to stop them or to make them move differently. If we allow Nature to work freely by itself, it will not have any anger or frustration.



Artwork by Unknown artist →

I hope that one day my mindfulness will develop in strength in order to accept any changes or experiences which may pass my way, pleasant or unpleasant. It is wrong indeed to build up any attachments or cling to the floating clouds, which is to then go

against the law of Nature. But to welcome and accept everything that we may come across in our lives with mindfulness is the way to happiness and peace.

A Sea Breeze

The fresh and peaceful feeling which I get from a sea breeze in the early morning of summer is very wonderful indeed! I like the sea breeze because it is so fresh and gentle and it comes to me when I am troubled by the heat. As you know, a sea breeze, originating from a vast ocean which is free from pollution, could travel a long distance, far and wide. When arriving on the mainland, it gently touches everything in its path, without making any discrimination, whether it is the shabby house of a poor man or the grand mansion of a millionaire.

A pure form of love which we call *metta* or loving kindness in Buddhism, if practised regularly, would have the same nature. It is originally conceived from a very pure and broadened mind which is also free from pollution by the fires of greed, hatred and ignorance. Through meditation it is gradually expanded and then gently spreads far and wide to all living beings. Whoever has a chance to experience this kind of sea breeze will feel happy, completely relaxed, physically and spiritually.

Since a vast ocean is blessed with a cool and calm atmosphere, it is very easy for it to produce the sea breeze. But for many of us who are still troubled by emotions and anger, it is very difficult indeed to generate loving-kindness. Anger, unfortunately, produces a heat wave and certainly does not produce a sea breeze! But no matter how difficult it may be, if we are very determined to put the fire out, a very cool and calm feeling which we really long for, would eventually arise. Up until then, great effort has to be made and more water has to be used.

Right speech and right action, if properly practised, are the best measures to contain the fires of anger, greed and ignorance. When moral conduct is progressively developed and is continually supported by meditation, sooner or later, any fire can

be extinguished. Through regularly practising *metta-bhavana* meditation on loving-kindness, a very cool and calm feeling will abound, and spontaneously wave after wave of Buddhist "sea breeze" will be sent to all directions.

As many people come to appreciate and welcome the natural sea breeze, we will also need to cultivate and develop *metta* or loving-kindness without expectations in our hearts. Buddhism as a way to peace will appear very attractive indeed. It will become increasingly popular and will be recognised as the way to peace and mutual understanding in many different parts of the world.

Practising Metta

There are many benefits from practising *metta* or loving-kindness. One who practises *metta* will sleep well, get up feeling refreshed in the morning and will have good dreams. Such a person will be loved by many human beings and will also be respected by the non-human beings. He or she will also be free from poisonous things and his or her facial countenance will appear very peaceful and

serene. The mind will be able to get concentration easily and the person will have a favourable rebirth even if he or she has not practised enough to be enlightened.

Loving-kindness is very powerful and it all depends on how much you have. As with water, if you have a lot you can put out a large fire, but if you have only a cupful, you may drink it but this does not benefit many people.

So, you should not go astray with the teachings. The further you are from the Dhamma, the closer you are to trouble. No matter how hard it may be, we should practise the Buddha Dhamma.

Anger

When we see the damage that comes from anger, we should stop being angry, but because of lack of mindfulness, it comes easily and takes over our minds. The mind is like a room. When good things occupy it, there will be little space left for bad things. If bad things are there, we will not find good things there. So if we

practise *metta* or loving kindness and *karuna* or compassion, there will not be any room left for anger or hatred. No one wants any trouble; we all want happiness and peace. This is human nature. However, through ignorance and delusion we cause trouble to ourselves and to others. It is not that we want trouble but it is our ignorant minds causing us trouble. So, if any person causes us trouble, we should forgive them and not harbour ignorance in our minds.

We should accept that people have different kammas, attitudes, backgrounds and training. We are not all the same. Often we meet people whom we have been with and with whom we have done good things together in a past life. We soon become very good and close friends again. They also appear very kind and good to us, but this is not the case with everybody. However, we cannot expect everyone we meet to be like this. We cannot expect everyone to have the same understanding. To improve ourselves, we must learn to forgive and cultivate right understanding and loving-kindness.

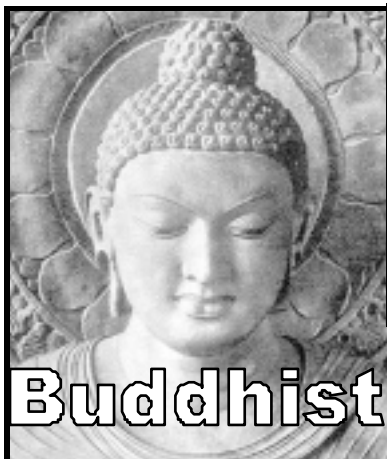
Tan Chao Khun Maha Sarai

'Friends of the Wat' — City-based Tuesday Night Meditation Programme

The 'Friends of the Wat' continue to host Tuesday evenings at the Buddhist Library in Camperdown. All 'Friends of the Wat' are encouraged to attend and to invite their friends.

The usual format for the evening is to commence with a 45 minute silent meditation. Occasionally, public talks are scheduled. On those nights a shorter sit may be held after the talk.

Friends of the Wat – Tuesdays, 7 p.m
Buddhist Library,
90-92 Church Street,
Camperdown NSW 2050.
Ph: (02) 9519 6054



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Buddhist Library

90-92 Church Street Camperdown NSW 2050
Phone: (02) 9519 6054 Fax: (02) 9519 3402
E-mail: buddhist@ozemail.com.au

Waking up to Enlightenment

"The mind is naturally pure and radiant. External objects pollute the mind through the influence of the senses and mental faculties or defilements."

– Anguttara Nikaya 1:10

trs. Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda

At the close of the millennium Eco-tourism is becoming more widely known and practised. Large numbers of people all over the globe are becoming more aware of the fragile nature of our environment and many are beginning to choose a holiday which reflects this awareness. More and more people are taking a break from their usual routines and attempting to make their travel have a minimal impact upon the environment where they choose to holiday. There is in this approach a new respect for the environment and a genuine understanding of the fragility and impermanence of our world.

The most sought after and popular places for this kind of travel tend to be places of great natural beauty and are often described as *free, unspoiled, unpolluted or totally natural*. Human beings, particularly those who live in vast urban centres, seem to have a real need to re-establish a connection with the natural environment. Some people have even suggested that this need is a natural tendency to re-balance our otherwise chaotic existence. Simply placing ourselves back in a more natural environment does seem to have enormously beneficial effects on both mind and body.

Wat Buddha Dhamma is such an environment, situated in a very beautiful natural area of high sandstone cliffs, dry open forest and filled with spectacular flora. Numerous native animals live in this environment and if they are quiet, people have frequent opportunities to observe them. This should be an ideal place in which to recover some of that lost balance so eagerly sought by travellers and tourists the world over. Pollution is minimal and the Wat Community makes a real effort to disturb the natural surroundings as little as possible. The Wat could almost be said to be ideal in matching the description given by the Buddha (in the Mahasatipattana sutta) of a place suitable for practise.

However there is something dangerous lurking which threatens to pollute and destroy this apparently pristine place. Something which is almost invisible, brought in to the Wat by many of its human visitors. A thing which is capable of transmuting itself into ever more dangerous forms and exiting the Wat with the departing visitors or retreatants.

What is this dangerous thing? It is a kind of forgetting and a losing sight of something.



Artwork by Liz Oski



Artwork by Unknown artist →

Many people forget (or perhaps have never heard) the simple and elegant teaching of the Buddha which appears at the top of this article and frequently lose sight of the goal of practise; waking up to enlightenment. This forgetfulness and loss of vision leads us to wander in the forest of the heart and mind increasing our fear, our greed, hatred and delusion. This is the darkness of dukkha which we generate for ourselves and others through this forgetting and loss of sight.

This forgetting and this lack of vision concerning the goal of practise can have disastrous consequences and for this reason the Buddha frequently enjoined his followers to always have the goal before them. The Buddha's own account of his enlightenment is instructive:

"then light arose within me, a vision arose within me of things not heard before".

The 'eye of Dhamma' or the vision of Dhamma is similarly spoken of and we know from the early accounts in the suttas and the Therigatha and Theragatha how central and important it was both for the Buddha and those first disciples. Why then should it be any different for us?

A mind (and heart) which is naturally pure and radiant sounds wonderful doesn't it? The goal of practise, the complete freedom of heart and mind, is surely something everyone would choose. Why then do we not accept the teaching of the Buddha and act accordingly – especially when we visit a place such as the Wat? Why is our practise so often an excursion into darkness and fear rather than a recollection of radiance? Why do people so often end up with confusion rather than real clarity of heart and mind?

First we try this method of practise, then that, now this teacher and then another and finally many people give up altogether.

Yet the Buddha, the Supreme Teacher of gods and humans may still be relied on by those with a little dust in their eyes, to point out the way; the way to freedom. If we take seriously the teaching that the mind is naturally pure and radiant and develop real saddha (trust and confidence) in the Buddha and his Dhamma then this mind which is pure and radiant seems the ideal place to which we should resort. The finest 'place' in which to re-establish balance and find once again our vision. Naturally, if the mind is truly pure then there can be no-thing in it, there cannot be an 'I' dwelling in the midst of this radiance. So this is not a call to 'find yourself' but rather to *see clearly* the cause of the clouding of the heart and mind. Only an 'I' can forget or refuse to see. Only a 'me' or 'mine' can lose the vision of the real. Only an 'I' can be enslaved or un-free. A mind and heart which is truly

pure and radiant is quite simply free and is endlessly engaged in re-collecting the goal of practise.

So it would seem that one of the great dangers which confronts us in our efforts at practising the Dhamma is precisely that they are 'our' efforts. 'Ours' in the sense that we enter into the experience of Bhavana with all sorts of ideas about what *we* will do, what *we* will achieve, what *we* will gain, what '*we*' will let go of. All the time forgetting that this 'I' is also like an "external object which pollutes the mind" and diminishes its radiance and freedom. This 'I' obscures our vision of the goal of practise and is an obstacle to truly having the goal before us.

This is very difficult to approach but we have the assurance and experience of the Buddha on which we can rely for guidance. Just as the new eco-tourist is expected to make a minimal impact on

the visited environment and to remove all rubbish on leaving, so those who are making the effort to practise at Wat Buddha Dhamma should do the same. Take with you as little as possible, leaving behind all the grand schemes, ideas and views. Remember the radiance and purity of the mind and re-collect the goal of all practise; freedom, *appamana* or limitlessness.

Let the natural environment be but a pale reflection of your own heart and mind. See the impermanence of all things, listen to the voice of anatta and heal the wound of dukkha with the medicine of Dhamma.

"For suffering is but no sufferer,
Not the doer but certainly the deed is found.
Peace is but not the appeased one,
The Way is but the walker is not found."

Buddhaghosa



Artwork by Maggie Lane

Buddhist Scripture Classes



YOUR HELP IS NEEDED



We are desperately seeking reliable & committed **BUDDHIST TUTORS** to teach **Buddhist Scripture Classes** to primary school, possibly high school, children during school hours.

Can you devote a few hours a week to the Dhamma?

N.B. Training will be provided, as well as teaching resources. Please submit your details in writing, marked to the attention of Miranda Kuijpers, Education Co-ordinator, Buddhist Council of NSW, P O Box 543, COOGEE 2034.

Telephone: 02 9669 3053, or send me an e-mail belindav@netaus.net.au

Thank you for your support!

The Buddhist Council of NSW is in need of help to find a secretary and treasurer to serve on their Committee in the forthcoming A.G.M. The work of the Council increases with time they also need people with some free time to look after the Council's office during the week. If anyone can spare some time it would be greatly appreciated. Please contact the:

Buddhist Council of NSW, P.O. Box 224, Burwood, NSW 1805.

Or phone (02) 8338 0851.

When you leave the Wat take nothing but the recollection of the purity and radiance of the heart/mind and the vision of the goal of practise before you. This mindfulness will be a blessing to yourself and others in realising the goal of practise.

A period of practise at the Wat is an ideal opportunity to get away to a place which is *free, unspoiled, unpolluted* and *totally natural* and to recognise the truth spoken by the Buddha that, "the mind is naturally pure and radiant"... It is an opportunity to learn that this 'place' is 'no-place' and it is an 'encouragement' to share that vision of the goal of practise with others. My own teacher said to me many years ago:

"Do not be constantly looking for the ideal place to practise. Enter into the forest of your own heart. There you will find the seat of enlightenment. Sit down and don't move. There you will find real freedom."

May everyone who reads these words come quickly to the complete freedom of enlightenment.

May all beings be well!

May all beings be happy!

Ven. Tejadharmo

Courses and Events

17 Sep 1999 'Friends of the Wat' Weekend

to
19 Sep 1999

These occasions are a wonderful opportunity for new people to visit the Wat and bring children, family and friends along to an informal weekend. There will be a Dhamma talk on Saturday evening. Come along and relax, meditate and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Remember you must book by the Wednesday prior to the weekend! Cost: by donation.

1 Oct 1999 October Long Weekend Retreat with Pip Ransome

to
4 Oct 1999

'*The Four Supreme Emotions*'. Beginners and experienced meditators alike will benefit from the weekend, based on mindfulness and loving kindness. Meditative absorptions (*Jhānas*) will be explained and participants will have the opportunity to receive individual guidance in their practice. Led by Pip Ransome, who was authorised to teach by the late Venerable Ayya Khema. Cost for accommodation and meals: \$120. This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes on Monday after lunch.

15 Oct 1999 Beginners' Meditation Weekend with Judith Lai

to
17 Oct 1999

'*Ease and Effort*'. This weekend is not an endurance test, it is an introduction to meditation. We discover how to practice sitting and walking meditation and we will explore the balance between ease and effort in Buddhist meditation practice. We will discover how these practices profoundly and positively affect everyday life. This retreat will be conducted in Noble Silence. Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60. This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

29 Oct 1999 'Friends' Weekend and Thai–Australia Day (Sunday)

to
31 Oct 1999

For details see Sept. 'Friends' entry. Cost: by donation. Please book by Wednesday before weekend. On Thai–Australia Day we celebrate the end of Rains with a traditional Dana day, so please bring a plate of food to share.

Please phone the Wat (if you are attending) by the Wednesday before the weekend.

5 Nov 1999 Nine Day Retreat with Ajahn Brahmavaṃso

to
14 Nov 1999

"I teach the type of meditation that I learned, and still practise, in N.E. Thailand. It was usually called *citta bhāvanā* (development of the mind) and it makes no separation between Samatha & Vipassana. Both are seen as aspects of the same way of practice which includes the development of Jhāna. The development of Jhāna is seen as a practice of letting go and as a necessary requirement for liberating insight. So these are some of the things I will teach in the retreat."

Cost for accommodation and meals is \$300. This course starts on Friday at 5 p.m. and finishes on the following Sunday week after lunch.

Please phone the Wat for further information about any of the listed events. Booking for courses and 'Friends' Weekends is essential. Please remember that teachers are not paid by the Wat. It is the Buddhist tradition that teachers are supported by their students. We strongly encourage any course participant to practice generosity towards teachers by making a donation at the end of course. Office hours: Mon-Sat, 9-12 noon: (02) 4323 3193.

***Please note: the gate lock combination will change on Wednesday, Sept 1st, 1999.
Don't get caught out! Make sure you ring the office for the new combination.**

26 Nov 1999 **Stillness in *Action* – Blending Meditation and *Action* in a**
to **changing world.**
30 Nov 1999 **Retreat Leaders: — Subhana Barzaghi Roshi, Bobbi Allan,**
Simon Clough and Gilly Coote.

(5 day retreat)

This retreat combines practices for tranquillity, insight and compassion from Buddhist meditation with Joanna Macy's dynamic processes for reconnection and engagement in and with the world. Joanna Macy's *Work that Reconnects* helps people uncover and experience their interdependence with each other and with all of life. It enlivens and motivates people to find and play their unique role in creating a sustainable future. Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$150. This course starts Friday 5 p.m. & finishes after lunch on Tuesday.

Bookings through: Wat Buddha Dhamma. Information from: Bobbi Allan (02) 6688 6147

3 Dec 1999 **Weekend Meditation Retreat with John Barter**
to **'Meditation and Transforming Emotion'**
5 Dec 1999

John brings to the course 18 years of personal practice in meditation, for 11 years of which he was a Buddhist monk. He has a degree in psychology and is currently completing post graduate work. Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60. This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

10 Dec 1999 **'Friends of the Wat' Weekend**
to
12 Dec 1999

For details see Sept. 'Friends' entry. Cost: by donation. Please book by Wednesday before the weekend.

26 Dec 1999 **Eight-Day New Year Retreat with Anja Tactor**
to
2 Jan 2000

Wat Buddha Dhamma will have an eight-day retreat over the New Year period. This will be a good opportunity to start your year in quiet contemplation. Anja Tactor has been a student of Buddhist meditation for over 18 years. She has studied extensively with the well known Buddhist teacher (the late) Ayya Khema over a number of years and was authorised by Ayya to teach Dhamma and meditation. Anja has been leading retreats in Holland (her home country), Australia, New Zealand, America & England.

Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$240. The course starts on Sunday 26th December (Boxing Day) 5 p.m. and finishes Sunday 2nd January after lunch.

14 Jan 2000 **'Friends of the Wat' Weekend**
to
16 Jan 2000

For details see Sept. 1999 'Friends' entry. Cost: by donation. Please book by Wednesday before the weekend.

21 Jan 2000 **Ten-Day Retreat with Venerable Gunaratana**
to
30 Jan 2000

Bhante Gunaratana was born in 1927 in a small village in Sri Lanka and was ordained at the age of 12 as a Buddhist monk. At the age of 20 he was given higher ordination in Kandy in 1947. At the invitation of the Sasana Sevaka Society, Bhante Gunaratana went to the United States in 1968 to serve as Hon. General Secretary of the Buddhist Vihara Society of Washington, D.C. He has also pursued his scholarly interests by earning a B.A., an M.A., and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from The American University. He is the author of *Come and See*, *The Path of Serenity and Insight*, *The Jhanas* and *Mindfulness In Plain English*.

Venerable Gunaratana is the abbot and the president of the Bhavana Society, a Forest Monastery and Retreat Centre in West Virginia, U.S.A.

Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$270. The course starts on Friday 21st January 5 p.m. and finishes on Sunday 30th January after lunch.

Letter to the Editor

My first experience of Wat Buddha Dhamma was a weekend retreat in September a few years ago. We had driven up from Sydney after work on a Friday evening and arrived after dark. The road from the gate had been described as a 'goat track' by Peter Kohout, who had taken our booking. He advised that it usually took him 40 – 45 minutes to drive it. Such was my uptight aggressive city attitude that it took us less than 20. My passenger arrived with rather white knuckles.

When I climbed out of the car, I was immediately struck by the distinctive and very welcome scent of Australian native flowers. It was all-enveloping in the cool evening air. The smell of the bush, the quiet and the brilliant stars overhead made me realise immediately that we were in a very special place. I could feel my shoulders release a little tension and drop away from my ears.

After supper (big bowls of delicious soup, so thick it bordered on stew) we

were led through the bush to the Sala. After the rough-hewn appearance of the kitchen and Cynthia's House, I was totally unprepared for the Sala. Its graceful proportions, curved ceiling beams and the glow of the beautifully finished woodwork was far more sophisticated than I could ever have anticipated. I thought of Buddhist temples I have seen in various places and decided that the simplicity and grace of the Sala's shrine makes it uniquely beautiful – doubly so by candlelight.

The Wat in daylight lived up to my heightened expectations of the first evening. Everywhere there were flowers – the magenta coloured grevilles, kangaroo paw at the kitchen, bottlebrush, flowering gums, waratahs, Gynea lilies and various miscellaneous shrubs. Of course, all of this was upstaged by the wildlife. The little tribe of blue wrens flitting about the garden kept me fascinated during meals (so much for mindfulness!).

The glimpses I had of the brown wallaby and the full orchestra of bird calls, particularly at dawn, were also special, but the stars of the show had to be the goannas.

Did anyone else experience the same small thrill of apprehension when one of these bonsai Komodo dragons first picked its slow deliberate way past their feet at lunchtime? I think that their daily patrol past the diners is the ultimate in optimism triumphing over experience.

The retreat itself was a wonderful experience. I had attended a number of Dhamma talks and read books borrowed from the Buddhist library but this was my first real introduction to meditation. Like every other beginner I experienced the shock of my mad monkey mind, the frustration of failing to concentrate on my breath for even the shortest period and, of course, the stiff shoulders, numb limbs and the like. I also experienced the wonder of those few nanoseconds when my mind seemed to still and the spaciousness of the inner quiet that

seems to accompany Noble Silence. On a pragmatic level, I also enjoyed the food so much that it became a popular source of distraction during the sits. Oh the joy of that porridge on a cold morning!

We left the Wat reluctantly on the Sunday afternoon once the excited post-retreat babble over lunch had subsided. The Wat, and the teaching, had had its effect. It took me at least 35 minutes to drive back down the goat track. As I drove, I resolved to return to the Wat as soon as possible (note: still lacking mindfulness).

It amazes me how quickly the Wat became an integral part of my life. So many of my favourite people are Watties. Even during the periods when I am too occupied with the material world to make it to the Wat, constant news of Wat activities and the Tuesday night Friends of the Wat meditation sits at the Buddhist Library keep me feeling involved. Every time I do go back, there is a delightful sense of returning to a place to which I belong and I bring away more precious memories:

*hoar frost on a crisp winter's morning,
black cockatoos screeching across the summer sky,
the morning sun through the stained glass windows of the sala during the morning sit,
evening sits almost cosy with the windows closed and the shrine lit only by candles,
the beauty of Anja's voice chanting,
gang-gangs contentedly chirruping in the trees as they eat,
moonlight so brilliant a torch is unnecessary,
a goanna climbing into a large wok put out for washing or chasing a soccer ball (formerly a football player?)
the inspiration of the Dhamma talks and teaching from so many wonderful and generous teachers;
and always, always the smiles and welcoming hugs.*

I am very aware of how fortunate I am to have 'discovered' the Wat and this is a rather sentimental attempt to record how much the Wat means to me. I am also

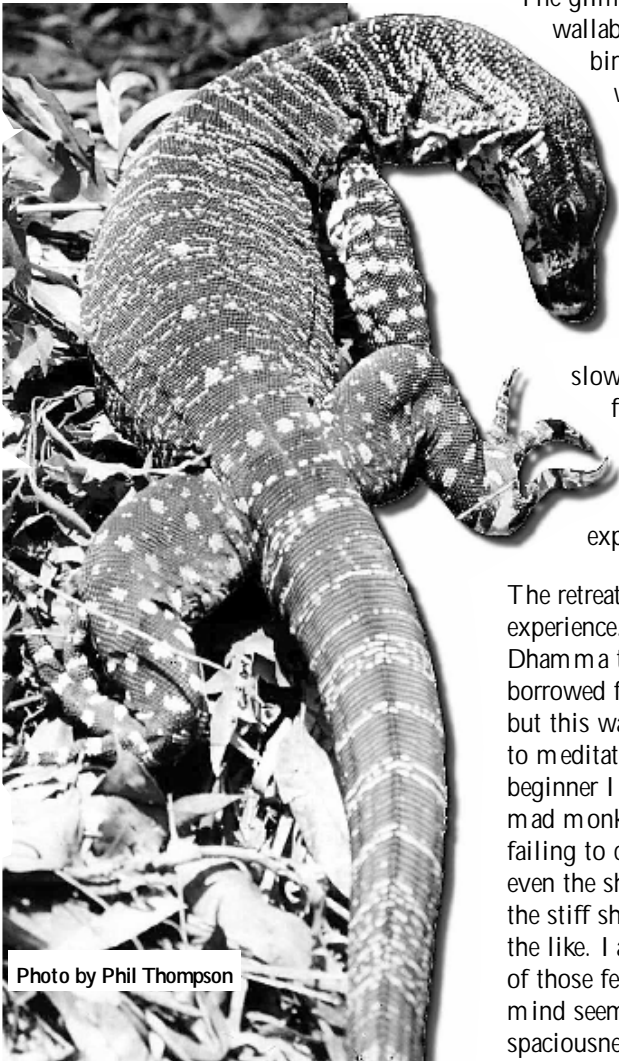


Photo by Phil Thompson

very conscious that I have only known it for a short time. Like many newcomers, I often speculate what it must have been like 5, 10 or 20 years ago (it is a sad fact that we are unlikely to ever really know the history of the area before it became the Wat). So many people have lived at the Wat or visited in the last two decades.

I would love to know of their experiences of the place and its people. I would also like to thank all of the people who have contributed their time and money to help make it the Wat we know today. You have given us a precious gift.

Helen Brennan

[**Editors Note:** *This is the first of what we hope will be many letters recounting memories of Wat Buddha Dhamma. Please contribute your share of the mosaic of experiences that make up the Wat to an on-going series in the quarterly Bodhi Leaf magazine.*]

Readers' Poetry

Fluidity of Reality

I look at a droplet of water
Balancing on a twig
It reflects the trees, the sky and me

It came from the mist in the valley
From the spout of a whale in a storm
It buoyed a corpse on the Ganges
And quenched a rapists' thirst
It reflected a purple sunset
Mingled with poison to kill a prince
It was sprayed with angry words in
Kosovo

It washed the hair of a beautiful girl
I tasted it on my lover's lips
And once scooped it as a tear from
your cheek
And now as I study it
It falls to the ground.

Alison Braund

Relief

Worst fears realised
Are never as bad as you think
A Huntsman fell on my head!

Alison Braund



Leaving

Leaving is of many forms
gentle, clear and turbulent like the
storm
separation though is Mara's thorn.
In the dark nights longing
we stay too long or too little
we bow and make an anjali

to the coming and the going
in the thronging of our heart.
We know we all must depart
but in this eternal homecoming
moment to moment, now to now
tears never end.
We bake a new bread
remember the old dough
the fresh rising cake
the crusts of yesterday under feet.
We hear the birds sing
and the silence of the trees
the heart beat of the earth
telling wondrous stories
of this old leaving and new sister
arriving,
singing songs of gratitude
hanging off the moon
holding hands with the stars
We pray you will not wander
away too far.

Gus Reale

Wat's Happening

It's now August and I've been here almost 6 weeks and want to thank all of you in the residential community and the extended community of Friends who have been so welcoming and supportive. My name is Deanne and I am the new manager here at the Wat. Though new to the Wat I have been practising meditation since 1984, initially at Gaia House in my home country England and for the last 11 years in New Zealand, where I've been closely associated with Te Moata – a retreat centre in the Coromandel.

Living and working at the Wat within this depth of silence and surrounded by acres of bush feels to be an extraordinary blessing. This was particularly marked last weekend when we held our first 'Friends' weekend. The highlights were an

opportunity to present Claudia Grab with a gift expressing the gratitude of all for her three years of close association with the Wat, mostly as manager. The second highlight – a moonlit, occasionally showery, poetry reading around the fire, where people shared their favourite poems, songs and some their own compositions. It was a really magical evening and we've included some of the poems in this *Bodhi Leaf*.

There has been some movement over the last six weeks within the residential community, with two members, Chris Moyses and Bruce Chatfield leaving. Thanks to them both for having made significant contributions to the kitchen, which is now looking nearer completion.

Retreats have kept the community busy with a very full Beginners' retreat with Judith Lai in July, followed by a successful Queer Dharma retreat with Winton Higgins. Next weekend we look forward to a self run retreat for experienced meditators in which the whole community will participate and contemplate the theme of *metta*.

For the August community outing we're headed for Sydney – for an evening of story telling at the Buddhist Library (20th August) followed by an afternoon at the Korean Bath House – both much looked forward to.

Deanne Taylor

P.S. Wanted by the WBD Community – a good couch to go in the reading room of the library. Any offers?

Impermanence

Exposure to the Elements (or What's eating you?)

Winter solstice has just passed for yet another swoop around the sun and I asked myself "What impresses me at this time of the year"? It has to be the start of blossom time for the Sydney Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) bringing puffs and clouds of gold, filling the Wat and way beyond; bringing some light and lightness during these short days. "Hello pleasant feeling."

And then it rains, rains some more and then some more. Will the blossoms fall? Will it be 'Goodbye' pleasant feeling for my sense desires? Will it be better or worse than last year? What about next year? Or relax and accept that this is how it is right here and now this year? Just as it is.

And it is not just a thing between the wattle and myself. It proliferates much further to the bounds of imagination in its interdependence, supporting conditions and sheer beauty of its forever 'changingness'. Let us push one of the countless dominoes labelled 'Wattle' and have a quick look. 'Plink.'

The wattle is pollinated at this time by little native bees gathering food. By ruffling the wattle's inflorescences (blossoms) and gathering up pollen as well, the bees pollinate other blossoms as they go. The well-being of the bee population depends on a similar amount of food being available for them year after year.

Will the rain affect the wattle's rate of seed production? This seed is dispersed by ants taking it back to their well-aerated nests. So as to entice the ants to do this the wattle has an *elaiosome* (which the ants eat) joined to the seed. So the seed is moved farther from the parent tree and the ants are fed. After natural weathering erodes the seed coat – and in the right conditions – a new wattle emerges. The right conditions include such things as the solidity of the earth, moisture, sun and correct temperature, as well as an association with nitrofixing bacteria in nodes on the wattle's root system (a spot of mutual beneficence thrown in for good measure).

Later in the year you can see Black Cockatoos sitting on the trunks and branches of the wattle listening to and feeling the vibrations of the larval stage of Longicorn and Jewel beetles that feed on the living wattle tissue within. The cockatoos rip open the bark and feed on the grubs. Now the wattle is opened up for an infestation of fungal spores and bacteria, as well as termites. I begin to ponder the endless wattle 'battleground'. The wattle has to compete with other wattles of its own kind as well as the 645 plant species native to the Dharug National Park alone.



Artwork by Liz Oski

Who gets the benefit of the photosynthesised oxygen and the nutrients released when the wattle root system breaks down? I pondered the most obvious connections and then it went well past just wombats, worms and warbling birds, into the true 'World Wide Web' of space and time.

Take a look in any shrub or pool of creek water and you will find connections (even with the shrub and the creek). Maybe there is something there eating or trying not to be eaten, but all wanting to survive and protect their well-being. All being born, all dying – ever moving and ever changing – clouds, seasons,

moths, meals and mind-states. And then this thought occurred – "This is because that is, this isn't because that isn't". Everything, to be how or what it is, has supporting conditions. So the Sydney Golden Wattle won't be found in the Outer Hebrides for a myriad of reasons. Just as we who sit in meditation, breathing in and out, need the right supporting conditions. ["Are you getting your right supporting conditions today?"]

We could even trace the evolution of this wattle and its entourage adapting to changing conditions, from the time of a wet Gondwanaland to Australia breaking away, moving north and conditions drying out fourteen million years ago. The wattle's light-green/blue, tough leaves (that aren't really leaves) became modified, flattened leaf stems. To reduce water loss they hang downward 'on edge' so the sun has the least surface area to strike during the height of midday summer heat.

And without the sun, no wattle, no ants, no us. What if there was no moon to create the Earth's tides; and Sun to help create sea breezes that blow across oceans, drawing moisture that can condense over land into rain? Everything that can be fathomed in this 'fathom long body' is in this together. The Universe with all its solidity, fluidity, space and motion can only be known through the six sense doors. This solstice was not like last year, or the year before, nor will it be exactly the same again as our Earth spins around our galaxy called the Milky Way, and as the galaxies themselves move around each other – ever evolving.

So you can contemplate as you sit down on a hard rock, sheltered from some gentle rain, listening to insects and watching the moon between the clouds. With a cool breeze on your face, know that with all this spinning and moving; and growing and decaying; that you, the wattle and the ants have never been in this exact place, at this exact moment, ever before – nor will be ever again. Don't go for the cliched 'howling at the moon' but have a wry smile, relax and breathe in and breathe out the sensation of '*Impermanence*'.

Kenneth Marsdon



Above:
 Geoff Dawson's Zen
 Retreat Group Photo
 May 1999 &
 Zen Meditation in
 WBD Sala 'Zendo'



**Middle and
 Below:**
 Children with Tan
 Chao Khun Maha
 Samai at Vesak '99



Wat Buddha Dhamma, Ten Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry, NSW 2775, Australia. Phone: (02) 4323 3193
 Wat Buddha Dhamma is a Buddhist Hermitage and Retreat Centre. It provides an unique setting for the development and cultivation of a simple spiritual lifestyle; while following the Theravada Tradition, it is open to other Buddhist teachings. The Wat provides opportunities for individuals and groups to practise the Dhamma in a beautiful bush setting. A variety of retreats and meditation courses, for beginners and experienced practitioners, is offered during the year; and information about these courses is contained in this newsletter. Facilities are also available for people wishing to undertake solitary retreats or participate in our village life as guests. For information please ring the Wat office: 9:00 a.m. and 12 noon, Monday to Saturday. The *Bodhi Leaf* is issued four times yearly at no charge. By annual payment of \$20 membership you can be a 'Friend of the Wat'; in return we will send the Bodhi Leaf to you. Please send this slip with cheque (made out to: *Wat Buddha Dhamma*) to: 'Friends of the Wat', Wat Buddha Dhamma, Ten Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry, NSW 2775.

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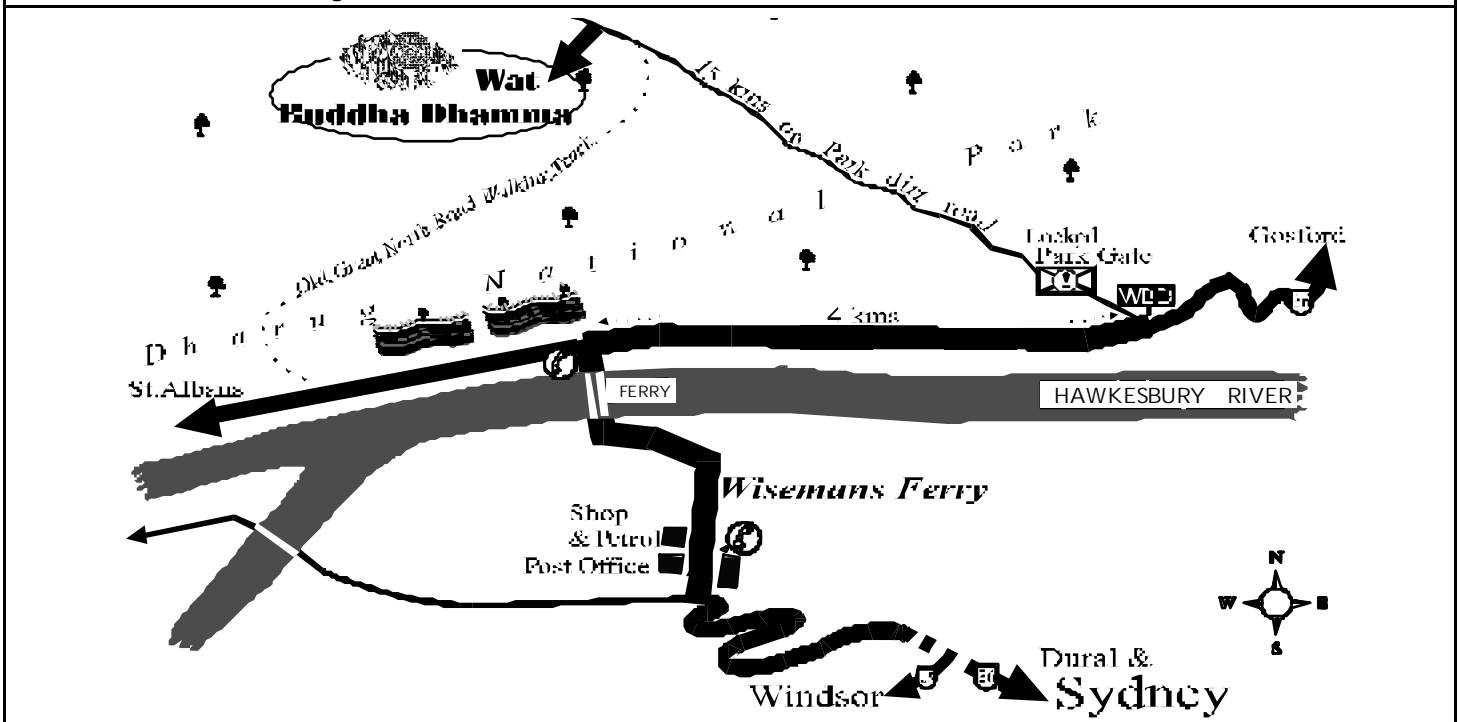
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Before visiting, be sure to contact the Wat Office (details inside) to obtain the current Dharug National Park gate's lock-number and for information.

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