

Wat e-News Bulletin March 2008

Each month the Wat e-News will update you on upcoming events at Wat Buddha Dhamma. Recently we had a problem with our email system and many of you did not receive the last two or three Wat e-News and for this we sincerely apologise.

Upcoming Retreats and Events

Good Kamma Weekend

Friday 18 April to Sunday 20 April 2008

Anzac Weekend Retreat with Ven Khemavaro

Thursday 24 April to Sunday 27 April 2008

Beginner's Weekend Retreat with Bruce Chatfield

Friday 9 May to Sunday 11 May 2008

Private Meditation Group Weekend

Friday 23 May to Sunday 25 May 2008

Good Kamma Weekend

Friday 20 June to Sunday 22 June 2008

Good Kamma Weekend

Friday 22 August to Sunday 24 August 2008

9 Day Meditation Retreat with Patrick Kearney

Friday 3 October to Sunday 12 October 2008

Weekend Retreat with John Barter

Friday 17 October to Sunday 19 October 2008

Beginner's Weekend Retreat with Bruce Chatfield

Friday 21 November to Sunday 23 November 2008

Good Kamma Weekend

Friday 28 November to Sunday 30 November 2008

Self Retreats

The combination of quiet and peaceful bush land, the opportunity to set one's own schedule, the excellent Dhamma library and the beautiful Sala (Meditation Hall) makes the Wat an ideal place for solitary practice. Secluded 'kutis,' (small huts) are located in the forested Hermitage and are offered to Monastics and lay practitioners for periods of private retreat and study.

Guests, Volunteers and Community

We welcome you to spend a day, a weekend or longer at the Wat to meditate, to work on the property as a volunteer or become a member of the residential community.

Membership

Your annual membership fee of \$55 allows the Wat to support a Monastic and Lay Community. We are a volunteer maintained organisation. Download the membership form from the website (<http://www.wbd.org.au/MembershipForm.pdf>).

Contact Us:

Phone (02) 4323 3193

E mail office@wbd.org.au

Website www.wbd.org.au

If you change your E mail address please let us know.

Feel free to forward this email to family, friends and colleagues who you think might be interested. Your privacy is important to us and we will never share your contact details with others.

If you do not want to receive the monthly Wat e-News click Reply and type 'unsubscribe' in the subject line. If you want to be removed from the Wat's database completely please send an email to office@wbd.org.au and type 'remove from database' in the subject line. Please include your full name in the body of the email.

Wat's Happening

Here is where members of the Community and Committee can add there own bits and pieces for your amusement, edification or just to say hello.

Adventures at the Wat – Brian filling in for Bruce over the summer.

I was able to get away at Christmas and spent it with my son and his family in Newcastle. Peter, an environmental consultant, was here over that period and the New Year. He said the Wat was having no impact on the surrounding bush, meaning that no exotic plants were spreading from the Wat into the national park, but he did identify one plant that's beginning to cause trouble. It's a non native grass with a long seed stalk, it tends to clump thickly together and with the rain that we've had it's appearing everywhere. Anyway the tanks are full and have been for a while.

National Parks dropped in and said that they had come into some money (did they win lotto?) and were going to fix up the roads, starting with the horror 4kms, then Simpson's track, then the Western Commission track and lastly the loop fire trail – no action so far but keep your eyes crossed.

The cicadas are still around but the wasps that kill them disappeared as if someone had flicked a switch, their mounds are now disintegrating. A couple of kilometers from the gate, right by the road, there is a tree that has been hit by lightning, a strip of

bark has peeled off from almost it's full height and shredded bark has been blown into the bush. Half the tree has now died and it's worth a look when next you come in.

People come, people go. Tan Nico was here for just over a week and Rena for three weeks. Yoshi came, he's a Japanese chef, and we ate well; that's just to mention a few. As I write this there is a group of 15 American college students, one faculty member and his family and they are here doing an aboriginal immersion course as one of their college subjects, Indigenous Australian Culture. There are 11 kooris here conducting and taking them through it. They are learning about the Aboriginal experience since the white man came and they also learn traditional skills. They have been for a ten kilometer bush walk and at the end of their stay will take part in a coroboree, covered in ochre.

Well, that's all from me; the next Wat's Happening will be from Bruce. Bye.

Thoughts on Fear while Wandering in India – Bruce Chatfield

A monk I was once with on retreat was asked about Kamma, how a criminal can get away with a lifetime of dark acts and still live in a mansion with all the trappings of a king.

'The man has lived a bad life and he is rich and protected,' replied the monk. 'He has his guards and his helicopter and a palace by the sea, that is all very well but he has no true freedom. A person like this is trapped inside a small and dangerous world, his thoughts are fearful even surrounded as he is by guards, they are there because of the fear he must live with; kamma and vipaka, action and reaction. The freedom of a monk on two hundred and twenty-seven precepts is far greater than those who do harm and therefore live in fear.'

For myself I have tried to lead a harmless life and I have received little harm from life, everyone suffers at times and though there is some sadness there is little fear in my world. I love this struggling planet and cannot fear earthquakes or other natural occurrences; this is the way it is.

In Mexico Mount Colima was erupting as I was passing on a bus and villages were being evacuated, I wondered if these people hated the tall cinder cone that towered above their homes. I gleefully swam with elephants in Nepal and stepped back quickly from a small snarling dog in Cambodia; I have felt the wonder in picking up big pythons at the Wat to remove them from buildings and when touched by a wild cobra in India there was just a moment's fear then I found myself admiring the creature as it slithered into the long grass. So, if I'm cool with whales and wallabies and rats and ants, the only thing left to fear are human beings.

If someone pointed a gun at me I think that I would feel fear, when I was young and intimidated by a bully with hard fists I felt fear, but it is not a thing to live with, it is something to let go of. India is a great place to practice letting go, but the Buddha's teaching on letting go is not, 'Going with the Flow;' he said that to follow his Dhamma was like swimming upstream, going against the flow. To let go of our desires is to go against the flow, to sit in silence while others play and dance, this is to go against the flow. I have danced away from the meditative life many times but I return because I know that true peace can be found there, it is a struggle, it is uphill, it is hard work to let go.

The middle path is what the Buddha taught; the way that lies between immorality and extreme aestheticism and India is an interesting place to walk this path. Compassion replaces disgust; understanding replaces contempt, and giving away just a little can

make so much of a difference. Lepers smile and take the coins in their fingerless hands and ignorance begins to fall away given time; the poor of India are some of the greatest of teachers. When I first travelled in India I thought it would be difficult but it wasn't, accommodation and food were cheap and easy to find, bottled water was everywhere and I could read most of the signs and menus, it was easy and without fear.

At the best of times I am no talker, I am a hermit who likes to travel and the best thing to do is to make children laugh and encourage them to accept a stranger with a white face. In Jalgoan I caused a traffic jam amongst a crowd of silent suspicious men who had never seen a white fella before. In Indore I stayed a few hours in a disgusting hotel room that was kept especially filthy for westerners, the men there wanted me to become angry, perhaps to cause a fight, but I left them without bothering to complain, the way back to the bus station was dark but I had observed my route:

'It's good to know where you are, especially if you're lost.'

I have never been physically lost but there have been times when I didn't know where I was. I've been wandering in valleys not quite knowing my route and been going the wrong direction in a strange night time city but with little fear, we are always exactly where we are. To sit alone at one's campfire at night under a broad starlit sky is one of the greatest of pleasures, there is no one to please, no one to be concerned about. I am no intrepid explorer or adventurer and have rarely been in any real danger, the act of walking and silently observing is one of life's true pleasures. To hike to a high point through forests of blue gum, kauri or redwood and just sit, looking at the lands about, this is joy. All of the hate and fear that binds humanity can be forgotten in a forest, the realization comes that the luxuries of modern life are insignificant when compared to the beauty of nature, of our mother, of our witness.