



# DHAMMA ECHO

## Hartridge Buddhist Monastery

### Newsletter

Issue - Jan 2025

#### SANGHA NEWS

Something seldom known in recent years is happening. Ajahn has had the thought “I should do a newsletter”! I had to find the last newsletter to discover that it was almost exactly four years ago since the last one. My apologies to those of you who have missed the occasional whimsical musings from Hartridge.

Where can I begin after so long? Well, the monastery is still here, I am still here, and there are a few other familiar features and people, although of course there have been many changes too. In fact, the tapestry of people and things which makes up Hartridge monastery is going through one of those occasional periods when the truth of “aniccam” (impermanence) can be noticed almost day to day. But as of today, there is still a fairly recognisable “we” present – six monks and a few lay guests. Yet before covid (BC), six monks were an almost unheard-of number, we were often just three. For vassa last year (2023) we were seven monks, and for a little while three anagarikas as well. Some were literally camping out. This year it has been more manageable with seven monks for vassa, although we have been without anagarikas, but fortunately with one long term lay resident. The building of three beautiful new kutis during 2022-23 is what has enabled this expansion.

Inevitably though there have been quite a few changes in the identities of those monastics who are here. At least on the conventional level. And too many to name and acknowledge everyone. However, for those of you with longer memories, there are a few that must be mentioned.

#### **Ajahn Vimalo**

Ajahn Vimalo is no longer with us here, having returned to live at Amaravati in May last year. Much more surprisingly, he later disrobed and is living quietly on a canal boat in Cambridgeshire. We miss his humour, steadiness and grandfatherly presence.

#### **Ajahn Gandhasilo**

Another surprise, or shock, was the passing away of Ajahn Gandhasilo in 2022. He lived at Hartridge from 2004 to 2006, and for several shorter period both before and since. Despite only ever having left the UK once in his life in his first 50 something years (allegedly), he had mainly lived in monasteries in Thailand for his last five or so years. He had lung and heart issues, which could be exacerbated by environmental impacts, and which affected his breathing. He had intended to return to the UK before the rainy season started in Thailand but had a sudden and fatal attack shortly before he was due to leave. The Sangha in Thailand arranged a large and beautiful funeral for him in the monastery where he was resident near Buriram, and although no-one from Hartridge was able to attend, Ajahn Jutindharo was able to stay at that monastery briefly when he went to Thailand at the end of 2022.



#### **Ajahn Ariyo**

Much more recently – in the last month or two - Ajahn Ariyo, after 9 years based at Hartridge, has gone away for an extended and open-ended period. Something of a “tudong”, living more as a wandering monk, open to see what arises, where to go and what to do. Initially he is visiting family in his native USA but then going on to Thailand. He

leaves behind multiple reminders of his many talents – many of the details and special touches in the Dhamma Hall project, the lead role in building the three new kutis in the last couple of years, and many memories of a cheerful and caring companion on the path. We hope that he will be back again at some point.

### **Our Current Resident Sangha**

Our most recent arrival, on the other hand, was actually an old face. Ajahn Kalyano was here for six months or so in 2007 and rejoined us a year ago. The others who are here now, apart from Ajahn Jutindharo, have all been staying at Hartridge for the best part of four years or more – Ajahn Vannissara, Tan Supanyo, Tan Mandali and Tan Sampajano. Some of you may remember Tan Sampajano as Anagarika Glynn, who became a bhikkhu in an ordination ceremony at Amaravati in July. For those of you who remember Anagarika Tom aka Samanera Cittasamvaro from our pre-covid days, he is also a bhikkhu now and currently living in Thailand after four years at Amaravati. Another very familiar face for the last four years has been Matt, who has been through a few incarnations in that time, but is, for now at least, Matt again. However, he has just left again on a new adventure to Sri Lanka, and we will miss his stable presence in the background, particularly in the kitchen. So, it looks like the community will be thin on resident lay support for the time being.

### **Wat Pah Nanachat Celebrations**

Further afield, for those of you who do not hear any news of our wider Sangha, there have been two large events since we last wrote. The first was in Thailand at Christmas time in 2022, when there was a big ceremony and celebration at Wat Pah Nanachat, the first monastery in Thailand established by Ajahn Chah specifically for foreigners. The event spanned several days and marked the completion of a new ordination precinct (“sima”) and Sangha meeting hall (“bot”). It was made all the more grand by the presence of His Majesty the King of Thailand, along with hundreds of monks from the many Ajahn Chah monasteries in Thailand and overseas, and thousands of lay supporters. Ajahn Jutindharo was able to be there to fly the flag for Hartridge.

### **Luang Por’s 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday**



Then, in May this year, there was another celebration, this time at Amaravati to mark Luang Por Sumedho’s 90th year. Luang Por had returned to England in 2021 after 11 years living in Thailand again. Although his birthday is in July, the event was held in May to enable monastics from around the world to come and pay their respects and spend time with Luang Por, as they would have been unable to do this during the vassa season (July to October). It was a delightful and special gathering, again over several days, and most of the Hartridge Sangha, as well as quite a few of our lay supporters were able to join for some of or all the occasion.

**And now**, as one full and eventful year has drawn to a close, a new one begins, and the story doesn't just end. New chapters and footnotes are being written all the time, an evolving picture, in which we all share, take part and co-create, for better or worse, and no-one can fully control. But the Buddha pointed out that there is a path that we can navigate through this sometimes turbulent landscape. We may not be able to control everything, but we do each make a difference and have an impact. Ultimately, what difference, and what impact we have is not only up to us precisely because each of us is only a tiny part of a much larger picture, and yet for each of us individually, the consequences of our actions on our own well-being are significant. We frequently chant a reflection of the Buddha's words on equanimity:

*"When they act upon intention, all beings are the owners of their action and inherit its results.  
Their future is born from such action, companion to such action, and its results will be their home.  
All actions with intention, be they skilful or harmful — of such acts they will be the heirs."*

The fruits, or consequences, may not always be visible immediately, but our choices do have an effect. For us and for the whole. Whether we choose to act on the wholesome, or the unwholesome, is up to us.

I wish you all many blessings for a fruitful 2025.

Ajahn Jutindharo



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