

*“A place of refuge, to abide at ease,
For developing Samadhi and wisdom,
This is a monastery,
The best of gifts,
Highly praised by all the Buddhas.
So for those who are wise
And care about themselves,
Let them then build a monastery
For the learned sages to reside.
They will then teach one the Dhamma,
Putting all one’s sorrows to flight.
Having seen the truth,
With a heart purified,
One awakens to Nibbana.”*

The Buddha

News from Vimutti Monastery

In recent months there has been a great amount of wholesome and inspiring activities at, or associated with, Vimutti Monastery. Already 2012 has seen a 24-day pilgrimage to Thailand, completion of important stages of the stupa, our largest ceremony to date, completion of a large workshop/shower/laundry building, a special visit from one of the top Buddhist masters alive and an intensive meditation retreat.

Buddhist Masters Pilgrimage in Thailand

Just after New Year, a group of 20 people joined Ajahn Chandako on a pilgrimage to visit many of the greatest living Dhamma teachers and enlightened masters of Thailand. The group visited and received teachings from Luang Por Piak, Luang Por Utai, Luang Por Sumedho, Luang Por Baen, Luang Por Om, Maichee Khun, Tan Ajahn Anan, Tan Ajahn Dtun and Tan Ajahn Jundee.

At Wat Ratanawan the pilgrims took part in a large Sangha gathering to mark the enshrining of relics in a stupa. The ceremonies stretched over three days, including Dhamma talks and visits from many of the leading teachers in Thailand, including one of the oldest people in the world, Luang Pu Sopah. There we also met with Maichee Khun, a

nun who was a disciple of Luang Pu Mun when she was a young girl. Luang Por Sumedho gave our group a long private Dhamma talk, as did Ven. Ajahn Viradhammo and Ven. Ajahn Kalyano.

At Wat Pah Nanachat the group camped in the forest, joined almsround in the village and made daily trips to Ajahn Chah's monastery, Wat Pah Pong. During this time there were abbots gathered from around the globe for the International Elders' Meeting, so the group was blessed to hear Dhamma talks from Luang Por Pasanno, Ajahn Amaro, Ajahn Chandasiri, Ajahn Sona, and many others.

There were many unexpected surprises, as is normal for such a pilgrimage, and one of the best was being able to visit Maichee Khun at her remote cave hermitage. Maichee's daughter and a local policeman enabled us to rent a vehicle that would be able to get up the dirt roads to where she lived. Maichee Khun is one of the most impressive female Buddhist teachers alive, and at 90-something she was an inspiring tiny bundle of Dhamma energy.

We also visited Luang Pu Maha Bua's Monastery, and by 'chance' happened to meet Ven. Ajahn Dick, one of the most senior western disciples of the recently deceased master. Visits were also made to the relics and museum of Luang Pu Mun and Maichee Gaew's stupa.

The final portion of the pilgrimage was dedicated to visiting one of the most remote and stunning Buddhist monasteries in Thailand. Wat Dtao Dum has been a branch monastery of Wat Pah Nanachat for 22 years, and the combination of rugged natural beauty and solitude makes it one of the best (and toughest) places for forest monks to live. The current abbot, Ajahn Siripanyo, graciously arranged transportation in and out. Whereas most of the travel during the pilgrimage was on a rented bus, the 'road' into Dtao Dum required something different. Packing ourselves into a caravan of specially outfitted, jacked up, monster-tired off-road pickups in constant CB radio contact, for a five-hour bounce towards the Burmese border through jungle tracks, streambeds and boulder strewn gullies was itself a bit of an adventure. Once in, the group could see why the trip was worth it. Situated in densely forested mountains, full of jungle animals large and small and exuding a sense that the modern world was far, far away, there is no place like Dtao Dum. Ajahn Chandako spent much time practicing here. One day Ajahns Chandako and Siripanyo led the group up a series of exquisite waterfalls to a high

valley where the monks live on bamboo beds in the hot season. The group refreshed at a ridge-top sala while the Ajahns told stories of Dtao Dum's colourful history.

After three and a half weeks in Thailand, the people on the pilgrimage had seen much, endured much, and met with the heart of the Forest Tradition.

The Vimutti Stupa

As soon as Ajahn Chandako returned from Thailand, the stupa builders were ready to begin the next major phases of construction. The first step would be the completion of the internal shrine and sealing the inner chamber. The shrine consisted of thousands of Buddha images arranged on and around a round stone table two metres in diameter. The packing of the boxes containing the Pali and English Tipitaka were finalised, welded shut and placed directly under the four main Buddhas. Included within one of the boxes was a large amount of digital information and photos detailing the history of our tradition, the relics enshrined and Vimutti Monastery. There were recordings of chanting and Dhamma talks, documentary videos and a photo frame on which to play the information. The granite tablets inscribed with the words of the Buddha were carefully padded and wrapped in monks' robes and arranged on the shrine table. The central pole blessed by monks and nuns from all Buddhist traditions was placed into its polyethylene container, welded shut, wrapped in monks' robes and placed vertically in the center of the inner chamber. The domed walls of this inner sanctum were plastered with a gold finish, resulting in a stunningly beautiful shrine to the timeless ideals of the Dhamma, a religious work of art designed to revere the highest of human aspirations, generate wholesome energy and pervade it in all directions. In the final days prior to sealing the inner chamber, the Sangha regularly chanted in the magic atmosphere surrounding the round shrine.

Creating the outer shell

The next step was to build another steel frame around the inner chamber to support a layer of sprayed concrete that would form the final shape.

Inspiring as it has been to build a stupa, the process has not been without obstacles. It is said that whenever someone determines to do good in the world, that will be a cause for kammic obstacles to surface—and the greater the amount of benefit, the bigger the

obstacles. The overcoming of these obstacles is then part of the purification process of the heart. If kammic obstructions are deemed to be proportionate to the benefit, then the Vimutti Stupa must be a project of monumental goodness. We have had every manner of challenges. Just when we were ready to cast the outer shell, our contractor suddenly had to be hospitalised for an operation. When we were next able to reschedule the many contractors needed for the shot crete, a huge storm front rolled in that forced cancellation. When we were able to again reshuffle everyone's schedule for another try, once again a stormy weather forced cancellation. Finally, on the third attempt to get all the contractors together, it was a beautifully calm and sunny early morning. As the various workers gathered with a sense of anticipation and excitement, one of them confidently said, "what could wrong now?" Well..... First the concrete truck was 90 minutes late. When we finally saw it coming in the distance, we cheered and readied for action....and then saw the truck drive on past the monastery, missing the driveway turnoff because on that day there just happened to be a road construction crew whose truck was blocking our monastery sign. The lead contractor, still holding his stitches in pain, jumped into his pickup to chase after the wayward revolving vehicle. When it finally arrived and we again readied for action, it was discovered that the concrete was the wrong mix, completely useless for what we needed. By the time a new order was placed and delivered, the afternoon heat and wind posed increased difficulties for the shaping and curing of the concrete. Even so, we were still able to complete the outer shell on that day. Soon the square reliquary and spire were also in place. The next step was to place the beautiful lotus petal blocks that form a decorative frieze. Although they had supposedly been computer designed to perfection, when the pieces were actually placed on the stupa it was discovered that none of them fit. After a week of attempts and discussions, they all had to be discarded. The process has been aptly symbolic of the challenges, frustrations, disappointments and successes that mark a human life, but let it be said that through it all we never, never gave up. In the end, the result has been even better than originally planned.

This stupa has posed unprecedented construction challenges that are considerably outside the box of your average builder. Our contractor, architect and team of builders have done an excellent job, stretching their creative powers and accumulated experience to the max. In the process they have been touched by the spiritual significance of the

stupa and (whether they realise it or not) have accumulated a huge amount of good kamma.

Enshrining the Relics Ceremony

The ceremony for enshrining relics of the Buddha, Paccekabuddhas and leading Arahant disciples of the Buddha went smoothly with the largest turnout of people the monastery has ever seen. Luang Por Piak presided over the ceremony and placed 28 collections of Buddha relics in a stone vessel as the Sangha and lay community chanted the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha (“Itipi so...”) 28 times. The number 28 is significant because this is the number of previous Buddhas that are said to have attained enlightenment since Gotama Buddha made his vow to practice as a Bodhisatta to become a Buddha himself—many great aeons ago. As part of the ceremony, Luang Por Viradhammo and Luang Por Piak both gave Dhamma talks to celebrate the special occasion.

Once the relics were properly enshrined in the stone vessels, the stainless steel box that contained them was strapped onto a bamboo palanquin. The crowd then formed a procession from the yurt meditation hall to the stupa site. With the Sangha leading the way in silence, the relics followed, mindfully carried on the shoulders of the faithful. The remainder of the crowd carried bundles of flowers candles and incense, and the human stream flowed against gravity to the hilltop stupa for three circumambulations. The monks then performed the paritta protection chants as Luang Por Piak performed his psychic feng shui, and the day then ended with joy and inspiration.

Luang Por Piak later explained how the presence of relics at the stupa will draw pure beings, focus wholesome forces and create an atmosphere of peace, making the entire area particularly suitable for meditation and mental cultivation.

Retreat with Luang Por Piak: Do It All Night Long

When Luang Por Piak arrived from Thailand to teach his second retreat at Vimutti, we expected his usual warm and inspiring presence. We got that, but what we didn’t expect was his surprise suggestion. A day before the retreat was to begin, we got word that Luang Por would like the monks to meditate all night long for the last three nights of the retreat and the lay people to do the same on the final night. Usually this all-night practice is a challenge even for a

single night, so three nights in a row was going to take some effort. But if Luang Por says that that's what we are going to do, then that's what we are going to do. One of the many benefits of having an Enlightened teacher is that when he gives direction, the disciples have faith to just do it—no matter how difficult, no matter if we want to or not—cutting through the complications of endless rational thought evaluations weighing benefits and drawbacks. You just do it. All night long. “Sit until you have calluses on your butts,” was Luang Por's directive. “Put forth effort and hold nothing back.”

Luang Por Piak's leading disciple, Venerable Ajahn Isara, shared the teaching duties and led us in the all night sittings. He himself had been doing this practice each night since he left Thailand to come here. The retreat schedule was already quite intense as it was, so when we explained to the full hall of retreatants that the nine monks were planning on sitting and walking meditation all night long for the rest of the retreat, and (surprise!) Luang Por has requested that all of them do the same on the final night, we weren't sure of the response. However, by that time in the retreat there was so much enthusiasm for practice and inspiration from the encouraging teachings that almost half the people decided on their own to join the Sangha for all three nights. Luang Por Piak praised the people here for their dedication to putting the teachings into practice and their willingness to follow in the footsteps of the Krooba Ajahn Thai Forest Masters.

There are many benefits in making the effort to push ourselves beyond the constraints of our self-perceived and self-projected limitations. Forging ahead into the unknown was made easier by the beautifully supportive atmosphere of being surrounded by Dhamma friends who were all making the effort together. Although physically challenging for everyone, the benefits to the mind became apparent as the nights wore on. At the very least, we developed much patience and endurance, and these are essential qualities for inner strength.

Sometimes you just have to do something that seems a bit crazy to discover new areas of energy, clarity and brightness. And when we challenge ourselves with something that we thought was beyond our capability and then find that we can in fact succeed, a wholesome sense of self-esteem and self-worth naturally arises. It was such a heart warming sight to look around the beautiful and simple meditation hall during the midnight to dawn silence and see the candlelit faces of so many people meditating with such sincerity. The shrine of Buddha statues, photos of our lineage masters and copious

flowers glowed in the golden light of the two flames, and all the work that we have done over the last eight years seemed worth it.

Comings and Goings

Luang Por Viradhammo, pioneer of Buddhism in New Zealand, and former abbot of Bodhinyanarama Monastery near Wellington, returned to the Land of the Long White Cloud for the first time in a decade, and the first stop of his reunion tour was Vimutti. His many old friends and disciples rejoiced at his return.

Ven. Ajahn Vajiro has continued to be a strong supportive blessing at Vimutti during his six month stay. He will be looking after Vimutti for most of April and plans to be in New Zealand until May before making his way to spend the rains retreat in Portugal.

Bhante Guttasila is visiting from Sri Lanka and staying at the Auckland Vihara for three weeks. He will be leading evening pujas offering teachings during his stay.

Venerable Mudito is spending some time at Bodhinyanarama Monastery in lieu of tudong. Venerable Santamano will go to Thailand in April on his way back to England.

Ajahns Chandako, Nandawat and Pongchai all planned to engage in the wandering practice of tudong for a month in March and April. On the day before leaving, however, Ajahn Nandawat got word that his mother was seriously ill and did not have long to live. We immediately booked a ticket for him to return to Thailand, although he hopes to rejoin the Sangha at Vimutti before long. Luang Por Piak told us that monks have a duty to help their parents when they are nearing death. He said with the proper support, the consciousness of the dying parent can be either directed to a fortunate rebirth or established on the path of Awakening. Meanwhile, Ajahn Chandako and Ajahn Pongchai will be wandering through the expansive and dramatic landscapes of the South Island with no money, no food, no plans, few possessions and much faith. Tudong is not travelling around like a tourist. It is an austere practice that forces the monks to be at peace with uncertainty and simplicity. Each step on the road is a step of walking meditation. Each mouthful of food obtained through the generosity of strangers has the taste of gratitude. Each day is uncertain and replete with possibilities.

Vimutti Rains Retreat 2012

August 2—October 30

The rainy season retreat (vassa or pansa) is a special opportunity for deepening one's practice. This three month period is a uniquely spacious time with near perfect conditions for developing meditation. One's responsibility is merely to practice the Dhamma with energy and devotion. This retreat time is particularly suitable for people who already have a foundation in meditation and who can motivate themselves with diligence. Ajahn Chandako leads the retreat, but much of one's time is free for individual practice. If living and meditating in a small, secluded hut surrounded by nature and beautiful views is your idea of bliss, than you might want to consider joining us for a rains retreat. Spaces are limited, and one would be expected to arrive at least two weeks before the beginning of the retreat to settle in and help prepare.

Held at: Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay, New Zealand

Registration: contact Vimutti Monastery by replying to this email

Dana

All retreats and teachings held at Vimutti Buddhist Monastery are offered on a 'dana' basis. Dana is Pali for 'generosity'. Offering teachings freely is a vital principle to uphold. This system of mutual generosity means that there are no registration fees: no charge for the facilities, food, management, caretaking, accommodation or teachings. To engage wisely with a system of dana means that instead of an attitude of paying for goods and services, a retreatant makes good kamma (merit or *punya*) by donating whatever amount feels right: neither too much nor too little. The natural result of generosity is an internal brightness and joy, and this creates a wholesome and fertile mental environment for developing meditation.

Upcoming Events

Vimutti Buddhist Monastery and the Auckland Buddhist Vihara

Click on these links to find out more:

[Good Kamma Day](#), [Open Day](#), [Day of Peace](#)

Saturday, April 14, all day

Good Kamma Day Working Bee
Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay

Sunday, April 15, 7:30 pm

Dhamma talk, Ven. Ajahn Vajiro
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

Sunday, April 29, 10:30 am

Open Day, with Ajahn Chandako
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

Sunday, May 27, all day and evening

Wesak Celebration
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

Every Sunday 10:00-11:00am (except Open Day)

Chi Kung lessons with Venerable Chang Shean
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington
This meditation in movement is an outstanding way to relieve stress, balance energy and develop mindfulness.
Sister Chang Shean is a Taiwanese Bhikkhuni who offers these lessons freely on a donation basis. All proceeds go to the ATBA.

Every Sunday 3:00-4:30pm

Dhamma School
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington
Give your children a good start in life with the ATBA Dhamma School. Available for any child or teenager from the ages of 5-18. Contact Benita 09 520-1392

Every Sunday, 7:30 pm

Meditation, chanting and listening to a Dhamma talk
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

Useful items to donate to the Monastery

Please see the list at the bottom of the newsletter for details.

Anumodana

We rejoice in the good kamma made by the following people:

Vinitha for vitamins and supplements
Douan Kham Chanh family for a stupa donation
Wan and Vitlyn Silva for a stupa donation
Freddie for a digital photo frame for the stupa
Judy and Larry for bringing electricity to the stupa
Meth and Jeevendra for organizing the welding of the Tipitaka boxes
Amita for shelving
Raja and Srimathri for offering relics for the stupa
Wimal and Malini Moonesinghe for offering relics for the stupa
Raja and Srimathri for offering to sponsor lighting for the stupa
Promsiri for a stupa donation
Jeremy for a stupa donation
Kittinan and family for a stupa donation
Stephen and Mae for a new shrine table
Bou, Anoja, Pushpa, Freddie and Shelagh for offering all their pilgrimage refund to Vimutti
Stephen and Mae for six small stone stupas
Pan and PJ for a stupa donation
Nok, Noi and Bahn Thai Restaurant for a pa pah offering ceremony for the stupa
Jae and Nok for organizing a food stall for the stupa ceremony
Tay Cheong for a new shrine table
Freddie for offering a toilet for the Vihara
Freddie for offering shelves for the workshop and garage
Benita for offering electricity for workshop
Su for offering to sponsor one of the marble Buddhas for the stupa
Vineetha & Nilmini for offering to sponsor a green sandstone Buddha statue
Nacha for helping to pay for Luang Por Piak to come to New Zealand
Nacha for providing Luang Por Piak's special diet during his visit.
Nacha for providing food for all 50+ people during Luang Por Piak's 5 day retreat
Nacha and Somkiet for handling all the travel arrangements for the visiting and departing monks
Joe for loaning tables and chairs for the stupa ceremony
Harsha, Chandra Gunathilaka and Janaka Kariyawasam for building a timber storage rack for the workshop
Gamini and Vinitha for arranging sound system for the Stupa ceremony
Ink and Nacha for offering a ticket for Ajahn Nandawat to visit his mother

Prashantha for offering ferry tickets for the monks on tudong
Wee Beng and Sandy Tan for plumbing assistance and a printer
And everyone else who has helped in so many ways. Sadhu.

**By the power of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha,
may these offerings be a cause for you to realise
the freedom and peace of Nibbana.**

Download the ATBA Chanting

Evening Chanting

The Buddha's Words on Loving-kindness, the Metta Sutta

Basic Introduction to Buddhism

For a simple, straightforward and concise introduction to the teachings of the Buddha, click on the following link

[What Is Buddhism?](#)

Carpooling

To make it easier for people to visit the monastery and to reduce your carbon footprint, we have set up a ridesharing system. If you would like to come to Vimutti but do not have a vehicle, or you would like to share a ride and petrol costs with others, please have a look at the carpooling page of our website. Both people looking for a ride and people who wish to offer a ride can post information on the site. Ridesharing is environmentally friendly, economical and brings people together. Click here to see

[The Carpooling Calendar](#)

Definition

Vimutti: [Pali] Release, liberation, emancipation; freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind. The suttas distinguish between two kinds of liberation. Liberation through wisdom (*pañña-vimutti*) describes the fully enlightened mind of a Buddha or an Arahant. Liberation through awareness (*ceto-vimutti*) is used to describe either the unbounded but temporary liberation of mind in deep samadhi (*jhana*) or the supramundane state of samadhi in the completely purified mind of a Buddha or an Arahant.

For complete information on Vimutti Buddhist Monastery and the ATBA, including maps, please see our website

www.vimutti.org.nz

We wish you all much benefit and happiness from practicing meditation and leading a good life.

Opportunity for Offerings

Vimutti Buddhist Monastery can only continue to exist and offer opportunities for Dhamma practice if people continue to support it. Everything we currently make use of was donated by people in the past, and our donations in the present create the opportunity for others in the future to be able to learn and practice the teachings of the Buddha. This system of mutual generosity gives everyone the chance to optimize their good kamma. The following are some suggestions for donations:

Names in yellow have already sponsored this item

Sala

Wooden shrine table for main Buddha (Stephen and Mae, Tay Cheong)

80cm Indonesian stone Buddha \$550

Wooden Gate leading to the yurt meditation hall. 4 metres wide (\$1200)

The Stupa

Marble Buddha for the stupa shrine (Su Komatsu)

Green sandstone Buddha (Vineetha & Nilmini Gamage)

'sila', 'samadhi', 'panna' and 'vimutti' granite plaques for each of the four shrines outside the Vimutti Stupa. Estimated cost: \$100 each

Lighting: spotlights and smaller lights for circumambulation (Raja)

Electricity for stupa (Judy and Larry Loo)

A roofed shelter next to the stupa to protect people from wind, rain and sun. Approximately \$5000

Rock wall around base of stupa. The rock itself would cost approximately \$2,500, while the labour is estimated to cost \$5-10,000—even though monks plan to do as much of the work as possible to reduce the cost. approximately \$9000

Tiles to cover the base walking area. There is approximately 50 sq. metres to tile, with the tiles costing \$50-100 per sq. metre.

Benches: wooden benches in the corners of the base of the stupa. \$200 each

Landscaping: we will need an excavator to do the final shaping of the ground, spread topsoil and place boulders above road. We will then make a circular path around the base of the stupa with weed matting and stones. (Nuan)

1.6m Indonesian stone stupa for Vihara, \$2350

2.2m Indonesian stone stupa for Vimutti, \$3220

80cm tall stone stupas as lanterns for around the stupa. \$100 each

Workshop/laundry and shower facility

Bringing electricity to workshop \$5250

Electrical work at workshop (Benita)

3 Water tanks \$5,640 each

Water pump \$1200

4 Showers

Gas hot water heater

Shelving and pallet racking (Freddie)

Timber storage rack \$2700

Cupboards and desk for laundry room

Retaining walls for storage of gravel, rocks and mulch \$2800

Kuti for Ajahn Nandawat

Enclosing the veranda with windows and plastic. \$2500

Wooden boards for inside walls. \$1060.

Flooring \$500