

Harnham Buddhist Monastery Trust

Annual report from the Monastery's Trustees

Year ending December 31st 2018



Triple Pabbajja on the 22nd of July 2018.

The Trustees of Harnham Buddhist Monastery take this opportunity, during the month of Vesak, to offer our best wishes to the extended community of friends and supporters and to report on the activities of the monastery and the Trust during 2018.

As always, the monastery can only continue to exist and function as a place of full-time training for monastic residents, due to the generosity shown by the lay community. In offering the material support necessary for it's survival, they ensure that there will continue to be a place for those who wish to commit themselves fully to the training laid down by the Buddha and also for others to come and participate – be it to offer requisites at the daily meal offering, practise meditation, listen to a Dhamma talk or stay as a guest. We are sincerely indebted to the sangha for their continued inspiring presence, commitment and willingness to share their experience of the Buddha's path with us.

This report provides information about the organization of the monastery and its resident community together with details of the activities undertaken during the last twelve months. A summary of our financial situation is also included.

The Trust

Harnham Buddhist Monastery Trust is a Registered Charity (no.1126476) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (no.06688355) and is the governing body responsible for the stewardship of Harnham Buddhist Monastery.

The primary objective of the Trust is to promote the teachings of the Buddha:

'by providing, maintaining and supporting, in accordance with the Theravada Vinaya, residential establishments for a Monastic Sangha of persons who have undertaken the rules of training (Sikkhapada) and to support lay people in the practice of the teachings of the Buddha.'

The Trustees (who are also directors of HBMT Ltd.) in 2018, were: Philippa Padbury, Myint Su, Mike Pearce, John Bower, Kath Jones, and Paul Hansen (Chair). The Trust Secretary and Treasurer is Penny Wakefield-Pearce. Penny is employed by the Trust as Office Administrator.

The day to day affairs of the Monastery are overseen by the 'Management Group' (comprised of members of the monastic community and the Office Administrator) with reference to the Trustees. Representatives from the Thai and Sri Lankan communities have offered to act as a link between the sangha and their communities and other lay supporters have volunteered to be contacted for tasks such as helping with cooking, events and retreats.

The Resident Community



The community entering the rains retreat 2018.

This year saw a relatively stable resident community, usually of nine Sangha members. Luang Por Munindo and Ajahn Punnyo were the resident senior monks, though Ajahn Punnyo continued to spend some time away from the monastery to care for his family during a period of bereavement. Tan Ratthapalo joined us in April from Wat Pah Nanachat in Thailand where he recently took up the life of a bhikkhu and to where he plans to return after a two year period at Harnham. Tan Mandali returned to Portugal in June to continue his monastic life there and Tan Thitapannyo left us in April after almost three years at Harnham to return to Abhayagiri monastery (California) to complete his tenth vassa where he began his monastic life. Jason joined the community as an anagarika in April and also took on the role of kitchen manager. Jonathan Brown and Michael Thurston joined the community in 2018 as lay residents with a view to taking up the anagarika training in early 2019. Towards the end of the year, as is customary for junior sangha members of our tradition, newly ordained Samaneras Mahesako and Sangvaro went to spend a few months at one of our branch monasteries, in order to learn from a different training environment and

the support of a different teacher and group of spiritual companions; Samanera Mahesako to Amaravati (Hemel Hempstead) and Samanera Sangvaro to Cittaviveka (West Sussex). Both are due to return shortly after the winter retreat 2019.

The community list at the end of 2018 was :

Luang Por Munindo

Ajahn Punnyo

Tan Ratthapalo

Samanera Jayamangalo

Samanera Nipako

Anagarika Nic

Anagarika Jason

Jonathan Brown and Michael Thurston (long term lay guests)

Sangha visitors

Although this year was less busy than last in terms of the number of visiting monks, it was still a joy to be able to receive a few new guests and well as some of familiar faces. Ajahn Anando and Ajahn Abhinando came straight to Harnham from the Elder's council meeting (held in November at Amaravati) and stayed with us for approximately two weeks. Ajahn Chandapalo paid a brief visit to Harnham during April whilst on a visit to the UK from the monastery in Italy where he resides as abbot. Tan Gambhiro – who spent the early years of his monastic training at Harnham - came for his annual visit towards the end of the year. Sister Khemaka came to stay for a week during the period of Vesak and generously offered the annual Vesak Dhamma talk during the evening puja. Tan Pasado joined us for the vassa this year and then returned to Amaravati where he continues his training as a bhikkhu.

Events

Every year the monasteries of the Theravada lineage observe two major occasions. The first is Vesak (Vesakha Puja) commemorating the birth,

enlightenment and final passing away of the Buddha. Lay Buddhists take this opportunity in many Asian cultures to visit the monastery and make offerings to the sangha, as well as to listen to Dhamma teachings and reflect on the life and teachings of the Buddha. It was no different at Harnham, where we marked the occasion with the usual midday meal offering and then an evening circumambulation of the lake with an offering of flowers and incense to the newly installed lakeside Buddha Rupa. The sangha chanted the traditional 'paritta' or chants of protection and it was a strong reminder of the good fortune we all have to have come across the teachings of the Buddha and to have the opportunity to put them into practise in our own lives, whether as renunciants monks and novices or as householders. Sister Khemaka (visiting from the Nuns' Community in Amaravati) then offered everyone present a Dhamma reflection on the most fundamental teachings of the Buddha: the Four Noble Truths and the way out of the experience of dissatisfaction and suffering.

The second main occasion of the monastic calendar marks the end of the traditional three month rains retreat (vassa), during which monks are prohibited from travelling and must determine to stay resident in one monastery for this time period. This year there were just four resident Bhikkhus for the vassa, meaning that Harnham was to hold a 'Thod Pa Pah' (Thai) - offering of forest-cloth - in October as opposed to a traditional 'Kathina' ceremony (which, in the lineage of Ajahn Chah, requires that 5 bhikkhus have been present for the vassa). This certainly did not mean that the occasion received any less support than the usual Kathina, with several hundred people arriving on the day to participate in offering the robe-cloth to the sangha.

Asian New Year ('Songkran') was marked at the monastery in April with the traditional bathing of the Buddha Rupa. Those who came also used this occasion to wisely reflect on Dhamma teachings and to set a skilful intention for the new year by redetermining the five precepts, asking for

forgiveness and receiving a short Dhamma talk from Luang Por Munindo before offering the meal.

Many also came on the evening of 31st December to attend the midnight vigil and 'forgiveness and aspiration ceremony'. Luang Por offered the Dhamma talk and in the early hours of 2019 they redetermined the five precepts to bring in the new year with a conscious commitment to training in integrity.

Activities

There were a number of lay meditation retreats spaced throughout the year. This allows lay people the opportunity to commit to a period of inner intensification by keeping noble silence, the eight precepts of a renunciant and undertaking scheduled periods of sitting and walking meditation under the instruction of an experienced meditation teacher.

Ajahn Vimalo stayed in June to lead the main retreat at Harnham this year, attended by a large group of dedicated lay practitioners sitting (and walking!) alongside many of our resident community. Participants benefited from Ajahn Vimalo's renowned sense of humour which complemented a week of noble silence and commitment to formal meditation practise.

Ajahn Punnyo lead his annual retreat for a week in September. There were many familiar faces and also some completely new to the practice of meditation, who benefited from Ajahn Punnyo's calm and gentle presence and his emphasis on embodied awareness in meditation practise.

Ian Plagaró-Neil led a weekend retreat in September providing for those looking for a shorter retreat experience.

Regular periods were also set aside at the monastery during which the resident community and guests maintain noble silence. The monastery observed eight such weeks during 2018. It is a rare gift in the chaos and

activity of the modern world to be able to benefit and learn from this observance.

Adrian Bint continued his monthly beginners meditation class on the first Sunday of each month, for those new to meditation to learn about the practise in the conducive atmosphere of the monastery.

Luang Por Munindo carried on with his regular offering of Dhamma talks. The talk on the first Sunday of every month was always well attended and was themed around a quote from Luang Por Chah, taken directly from the Forest Sangha calendar. Recorded talks were uploaded to our website as well as to iTunes and are listened to by Dhamma practitioners from all over the globe.

On top of this, Luang Por Munindo published the bi-weekly Dhammapada reflection to subscribers around the world, which include his own reflections on a chosen Dhammapada verse. People continue to find this offering very useful in helping to apply Dhamma to their daily lives wherever they may be. The news blog was also sent out twice a month to update the wider community on the activities of the monastery and any monastery related information they may need to know about in the upcoming weeks.

Two new books were published by Luang Por Munindo this year: 'Alert to the Needs of the Journey' and it's companion volume 'Servant of Reality'. The two books are a carefully compiled selection of Luang Por's Dhamma talks recently offered at Harnham, and were made available for free distribution. Both books as well as the annual Forest Sangha calendar are available from forestsangha.org

This year Ajahn Punnyo paid a visit to several of the meditation groups affiliated with the monastery; Edinburgh and Glasgow in June, Leeds in September and to the Carlisle and Morpeth groups, where he offered advice on meditation and Buddhist practise and strengthened the link that these groups and it's members have with Harnham. He also received a group from the University of the Third Age in November.



The three samaneras-to-be, on the 22nd of July 2018.

During his visit to Harnham this year, Ajahn Abhinando was able to make a visit to the Edinburgh and Glasgow Buddhist groups who were glad to see him again and had many insightful Dhamma questions to ask.

One of the most auspicious occasions of the calendar year for any monastery, both for the community of monks and novices and for the lay community, is the ordination of new samaneras (novices) and bhikkhus. Harnham was very fortunate to hold a 'Pabbaja' ceremony (the going-forth to the status of a Samanera) this year. In July, saw Anagarikas Charlie, Justin and Dan take the going-forth under Luang Por Munindo to become Samaneras Nipako, Mahesako and Sangvaro respectively.

The lake property at Harnham continues to flourish and develop every year. In order to maintain it as both a place for contemplation and a haven for wildlife, we held a lake work day each month, when visitors could come for the day and join the sangha and guests at work. The work of strimming back grass, keeping clear the in and outflows to the lake, weeding, mowing and reviving trees damaged by inclement weather continued come rain or shine.

Building Project

2018 saw the major building projects at the monastery more or less completed:

The construction of the new glass conservatories behind the main monastery building now provide a much needed space for visitors to partake of the daily meal offering. On busy festival days – where there can often be fifty or more visitors coming to offer their support of food and other requisites to the Sangha – there is now ample space for a ‘pindapat’ (traditional alms round) and for everybody to have a sheltered space to sit.

The new scullery, robe-drying room and food storage larders were also completed and are now fully operational. There is also a bell-tower to protect the monastery bell (used daily to announce formal occasions such as evening puja) from the elements and some finishing touches were made to the Ajahn Chah stupa garden. The main office was finished and decorated and now functions as the centre of the monastery’s administrative activities.

The paddock area behind Mangala house turned out to be an ideal location for the new ‘Bamboo Grove’ kuti, which was constructed in autumn this year to give residents a secluded space away from the communal areas of the monastery to go to practise meditation. We are grateful to all those who helped with the planting and landscaping work around the kuti and the work will continue in the spring next year with the construction of a path to join the kuti to Mangala House.

Other projects

Outside of the winter retreat period, during which non-essential community projects are put aside so that the sangha can place more emphasis on the inner work of contemplation, the resident community (with the help of guests, visitors and volunteers) undertake various maintenance jobs and small building projects. This year has seen a number of restorations and upgrades to the following communal areas:

- The previous sangha office was moved into a more adequate space and the old room was renovated and is now in use as a communal exercise room.
- Our in house carpenter Jonathan Brown constructed a fence and gate to provide a secluded meditation space around the new Bamboo Grove Kutī.
- The old food storage larder was dismantled and has been repurposed as a building supplies store.
- The main tool storage sheds (which were suffering from wet-rot) were redesigned and refurbished to fit in with the design of the new larder and scullery.

Finances

Income

In 2018 the total income was approximately £316,716 which included a bequest (total income was £123,432 in 2017). Of this £294,464 were donated to General Funds, £22,708 to Restricted Funds (i.e. specified by the donor for a particular purpose) and £1,367 was from Interest and Investments.

Expenses

In 2017 total expenses were approximately £114,000 (£114,409 in 2017), £88,725 from General Funds and £25,374 from Restricted Funds.

In addition there was a capital expense of £128,145 on the building project.

Here is a breakdown of the basic costs spent in maintaining the monastery: (excluding expenses such as travel, publication production, and exceptional expenses covered by Restricted Funds):

| | Annual Cost (£) | Monthly Cost (£) |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Utilities and firewood | 23661 | 1972 |
| Household expenses | 9438 | 787 |
| Motoring expenses | 6864 | 572 |
| Rent, rates and insurance | 10222 | 852 |
| Repairs and maintenance | 4707 | 392 |
| Phones and Internet | 2340 | 195 |
| Welfare (medicines, dentist, etc.) | 5942 | 495 |
| Office Administration (salary, accountant etc.) | 17043 | 1420 |
| Events (retreats, festivals, etc.) | 1131 | 94 |

The Monastery also receives many donations of food and small household items throughout the year. A number of tasks, that might otherwise represent expenses to the Trust, are undertaken by volunteers, such as gardening, maintenance, driving and IT assistance.

Standing Orders

At present, regular donations by standing orders cover about 25% of the running costs each month. It is very helpful in managing the monastery's finances to know that regular costs will be covered to at least this extent. To set up a standing order donation, forms are available on the website www.ratanagiri.org.uk and at the monastery.

Reserves

As the level of donations can be variable the Trust holds funds in reserve to ensure that immediate liabilities can be met in case of a sudden drop in donations.

The Trust currently holds the following Reserve Funds:

1. Short Term Reserve: £25,000 (approximately 3 months running costs).

2. Long Term Reserve: at the end of 2018 held £177,503 partly designated to finish the current building project to create a larder, scullery, covered seating and a new office.
3. Replacement Fund: £20,000 for emergency repairs and replacements.
4. Ageing Samanas Fund: of approximately £84,000 which is invested to provide for any increased costs involved with looking after elderly (or disabled) sangha members. It is hoped that this will enable us to provide a level of care such that aged and infirm sangha may continue to live within the monastery for the duration of their life.
5. An Endowment Fund: £3,900 invested to generate income as a safeguard for the long term future of the monastery.
6. About £13,000 remains in the Mangala House Running Costs Fund, which was set up to ensure the costs of this extra property were covered for the first two years after purchasing it.

Banking

The Trust holds the funds spread over several types of bank account with different providers. These are a two current accounts, an account to receive standing orders, two deposit accounts and a unit trust. As far as possible the Trustees have chosen banks that are ethically principled.

Should you require any further information about HMBT's finances please contact the Trust Secretary, email: secretary@ratanagiri.org.uk

Policies

The Trust has adopted policies for: Risk Management, Investments, Vulnerable Beneficiaries (a Child Protection policy is being developed), Conflicts of Interest, Volunteer Management, Complaints Handling and Health and Safety.

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