

The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

SPRING 2007 Volume 10 Issue 2

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* CORRECTION: We regret that through a misprint in our September Newsletter the date of Fr Bede's birth was incorrectly published as 27th December 1906, instead of the 17th. We are sorry about this and thank all those who pointed out the error!

The Bede Griffiths Sangha is committed to the search for the truth at the heart of all religions.



Meditation

In this Newsletter we are considering the practice of meditation which was so important to Father Bede. There is an article on Fr Bede and meditation 'The Renewal of Contemplative Life' by Shirley du Boulay, Dr Hilary Knight on the health benefits of meditation and Ken Knight's Sanskrit Corner looks at the understanding of meditation within the Vedantic tradition.

Caldey, Prinknash and Shantivanam

These three places provide a link of continuity for the spiritual journey of Father Bede, and in this issue we bring you reports of recent Sangha gatherings at each.



Caldey Island

Caldey, off the Pembroke Coast, has been a holy island back into pre-history, and it was here, in 1906, that the Benedictine Community that moved to Prinknash in 1928 was originally founded.



St Peter's Grange where Father Bede started his monastic vocation.

ascetic lifestyle - but he did not find what he was seeking and after two weeks returned to Prinknash.

In 1955 Bede left these shores to 'discover the other half of my soul' in India and in due course, in 1968, took up residence at Shantivanam Ashram in Tamil Nadu, where he lived until his death on 13th May 1993.

It was at Prinknash that Fr Bede entered his life as a monk in 1933 and where he remained until 1947. Another link between Fr Bede and Caldey was that during his time at Prinknash, he asked permission to spend time at Caldey where he thought he would find a more



Entrance to the Shantivanam Ashram.

EDITORIAL

Meditation

One of the most significant spiritual phenomena of the last few decades has been the revival in the West of the time honoured practice of meditation. This started in the late 1950s when many began to seek inspiration from eastern spirituality, and certainly it was from Buddhism and from the Indian spiritual tradition that the main influence and knowledge of meditation came to the West.

Those of us directly involved at the time will remember the excitement and novelty of it all, but also the prejudice against its practice, in particular from the Christian church. However, in due course, many Christian teachers became inspired by aspects of Eastern religion, and were verifying meditation's remarkable power and benefit.

But perhaps it was not until Father John Main OSB, having found that similar forms of spiritual practice had clearly been a central aspect of the early church and for the Christian mystics, founded the Christian Meditation Movement in 1975, thus making the practice something that Christians could fully embrace again. As we all know in the Sangha, it was central to Fr Bede's spiritual life and teaching and a practice that the Sangha is keen to facilitate and encourage. We hope that you enjoy the following articles.

Your Contributions

Once again in this Newsletter we seem to have too much to include for the space available! I sincerely hope that in the next issue we will be able to publish more of the beautiful poems and contributions that have been sent in.

I also hope to include a correspondence section, so please write if you have something you would like to say in response to articles in this edition.

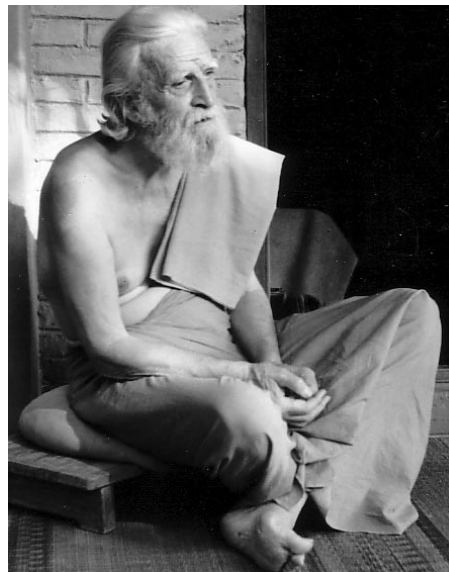
Timothy

tim@timothyglazier.com

The Renewal of Contemplative Life

Shirley du Boulay

Father Bede was often consulted by people seeking spiritual guidance. A young woman still remembers asking his advice, and still remembers what he said: 'I can only tell you one thing – meditate.' Father Bede's life was held firm on the rock of his meditation practice; everything else faded into insignificance by comparison. In meditation he found the still point beyond the world of duality, the reconciliation of opposites for which he longed. The regular practice of meditation was the single thing that most attracted people to Shantivanam; the effect that years of meditation had on Father Bede was what drew people to him.



Fr Bede at Shantivanam Ashram.

How then, did he come to practise meditation? Had it been part of his life since his first steps towards God? As a young man he had powerful experiences in prayer, living through a turbulent period that brought him close to breakdown. He would stay up all night in prayer, knowing that it would leave him weak and exhausted and driven into further confusion by considering Hindu and Buddhist mysticism. Was God a person, as Christians believe, or could he be conceived impersonally, like the Hindu Brahman? Was Absolute Reality a state, like Buddhist

Nirvana? His mind was in chaos; he thought he was going mad.

Finding his vocation as a Benedictine monk brought him stability and comfort, but though he valued the meditative reading of the Scriptures and the Fathers, increasingly he found that this was not enough. In fact he never found his ideal of contemplation, a direct experience of God in prayer, in the monastery, eventually realising that this tradition had been obscured by the emphasis on philosophy and theology. For him true meditation was not an exercise in discursive reasoning, its aim should be 'to pass beyond the limits of rational consciousness and awake to the inner life of the Spirit, that is to the indwelling presence of God.'¹

He was also saddened that western Christianity gave scant attention to the position of the body in prayer and indeed that so few Catholics taught meditation in the sense in which he was coming to understand the word. He was deeply in sympathy with all who felt the need for contemplative prayer, recognising that they were no longer satisfied with theories about God, they longed for direct experience, longed to learn a method of meditation, a way to reach the centre, the point beyond thought. He was impressed by people like Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington and most of all his fellow Benedictine John Main; indeed it is largely thanks to their influence that a Christian contemplative life is now within reach of all.

What then, was his own method of prayer? He would sit outside his hut for at least an hour in the morning and again in the evening, his practice being the repetition of the Jesus Prayer, ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God,

have mercy on me, a sinner’,) which, after many years, he had come to find ‘goes on almost always when my mind is not otherwise occupied.’ He explained his own practice of meditation with great precision:

‘To answer your questions 1) My meditation period is normally an hour in the morning & an hour in the evening, but it is sometimes shortened slightly (3/4 hour) & sometimes lengthened to 2 or 3 hours, but not commonly.

2) I find that the words of the Jesus Prayer normally repeat themselves. Sometimes it goes on rather mechanically, the mind wanders; sometimes it seems to gather strength & one prays in a concentrated manner.

3) Sometimes the words ‘fade out’, but rarely completely so. They seem to go on in the ‘heart’. One may not notice them, but one finds them going on, as it were.

4) If thoughts really intervene and cut off the prayer, then I renew the mantra again - or it renews itself, as soon as I realise what has happened.

5) Yes, I regard the concentration on the person of Jesus as very important. I feel that it puts one in touch with the concrete reality of his person, & ‘focuses’ the mind. To me this is the difference between Christian & Buddhist & Hindu prayer. Christian prayer reaches the Centre in & through Christ.²

Towards the end of his life Bede’s great desire and vision was the renewal of the contemplative life. He felt we needed both small groups that meet regularly and centres where people can go for longer periods. He also wanted to found lay communities and

drafted documents on the life he envisaged. He suggested that the people meditating in the tradition taught by John Main were setting an example, as groups of meditators, usually meeting once a week, were established all over the world. Bede wanted to take this idea further, forming small communities of men and women, married and single, secular and religious, dedicated to a common life of prayer and meditation while continuing to work in the world. He envisaged independent communities with no central authority, united in some kind of network. They would be primarily Christian, though open to visitors of any tradition and having contacts with a wide variety of religious organisations. Most important was that members of these communities should recognise a transcendent reality, which he saw as the greatest need in the world today.

‘Unless human life is centred on the awareness of a transcendent reality which embraces all humanity and the whole universe and at the same time transcends our present level of life and consciousness, there is no hope for humanity as a whole. The aim of every community should be to enable its members to realise the transcendent mystery in their lives and communicate their experience to others.’

Father Bede’s ambitions were thwarted by his death, but we have our inspiration in him. Now it is up to us to bring his vision to reality.

1. BG, ‘Indian Christian Contemplation’, Clergy Monthly, Vol.35, 1971.
2. BG, letter to Nigel Bruce, 21 August 1981.

Meditation Groups

In the next issue of the Sangha Newsletter we will be discussing the question of setting up and running meditation groups in the spirit of Father Bede’s vision, set out in this article by Shirley du Boulay.

We would like to hear from anyone of your experience of running or attending meditation groups. Also whether you run or attend a group that would be open to new members from the Sangha. On our Contact Page (page 12) there are details of a number of such groups and we are very keen to expand this.

Learning to Meditate.

There are many sources of instruction for meditation as a visit to the internet will tell you!

If you feel that you would like instruction within a Christian context, you could contact the World Community of Christian Meditation (formerly the Christian Meditation Movement as set up by Father John Main OSB), to see whether there is a group near you. They also have a large facility of books, videos and CDs:

The International Centre
The World Community
for Christian Meditation
St. Mark’s, Myddelton Square
London EC1R 1XX
England, UK
International Office:
+44 0207 278 2070
Email: mail@wccm.org

If you have any queries about meditation do contact me on tim@timothyglazier.com or at the address at the end of the Newsletter.

Health benefits of Meditation

Dr Hilary Knight hilaryhones@hotmail.com

I do not want to give the impression that anyone should meditate simply to obtain health benefits. Indeed we do not DO meditation at all, but put ourselves in a position where the grace of meditation can be given; we “make the intention of being with God in focused awareness”, as has recently been pointed out.¹ In *The Universal Christ*, Father Bede wrote: *Meditation takes us within ourselves. It is a process of inner withdrawal, a staying of the mind upon God.*

So these are the thoughts and intentions we should have at the forefront of our minds when we set ourselves to meditate. However, it is obvious that time spent in this way does have benefits on health.

Some articles on the internet suggest that meditation should be taught to patients so that beneficial effects will be experienced. Transcendental meditation or mindfulness meditation are the preferred methods, and there are plenty of teaching CDs available, such as “Meditation for Optimum Health.”² It is also possible to purchase “meditation machines”, which give pulsed sound or vibration³.

It has been found that meditation helps in the treatment of drug addiction, prolongs life, helps to control stress, improves pain control by relieving anxiety, lowers high blood pressure and even renders treatment for infertility more successful. Studies have also shown that meditation improves premenstrual syndrome, irritable bowel, insomnia, depression, panic attacks and fibromyalgia.⁴ These findings are the results of research by members of the medical profession, such as Richard Davidson’s study that showed the

effect of meditation in improving immune response and increasing activity in the part of the brain associated with positive emotion.⁵ Another study showed that blood pressure was lowered and ischaemic heart pain was decreased.⁶

A logical conclusion would be that people who meditate never suffer from the above problems. Unfortunately this does not seem to be the case, and it’s important not to think that if you do suffer from them it’s because you’re not good at meditation! The studies listed above were done on people who had medical problems, but I have not found any studies on the general health of meditators compared with the rest of the population. Dr Harold Koenig makes certain claims in his book *The healing power of faith*.⁷ He has found that *religious* people have stronger immune systems, live longer, use fewer hospital services, recover more quickly from operations and are protected from depression.

Meditation has been used as an integral part of pastoral counselling, or as a treatment in secular psychotherapy. But many studies have found that meditation is not any more effective than relaxation techniques, hypnosis, biofeedback, etc. Obviously the counsellor needs to have both knowledge of and experience in meditation, and ongoing support is essential. A note of caution has to be given: meditation is not suitable for patients with psychotic illness, and it may worsen anxiety, depression and epilepsy.⁸

A method of healing meditation has been described as follows:

“It commences with the familiar process and physiology of breathing-in health and life-giving oxygen and breathing-out potentially toxic carbon

dioxide. Guidance is then given to substitute God’s Holy Spirit for the inhaled oxygen and dis-ease for the exhaled carbon dioxide, directing the healing Spirit to wherever in the body it is needed, so releasing dis-ease to be expelled. After several minutes of this meditation, continue in silence once the pattern is established.”⁹

Another effective way of using meditation in illness is to put the mantra at the centre of the pain.

Fr Laurence Freeman spoke about the importance of meditation in terminal illness, and his words could apply to the effect of meditation in any situation of dis-ease. It is important at any time of life, but especially at the end of life, to be at peace, which is the effect of meditation:

Peace is not just peace of mind. It is not just control of pain. Peace is a reality of the whole person and therefore a spiritual reality. It is an energy. It isn’t just being calm. It isn’t just being protected from worry or anxiety. Peace is something positive. It is the harmonised totality of the human person.

1 James McFadden, “Ordinary Holiness” in *Spirituality*, Dominican Publications, Dublin, Vol 12 Nov/Dec 2006, 345

2 Andrew Weil and Jon Kabat-Zinn, available from Amazon

3 www.Meditations-uk.com

4 www.Holistic-online.com/meditation

5 www.hbns.org/news/meditation

6 *American Journal of Managed Care*, April 1996

7 Harold Koenig MD. *The Healing Power of faith: how belief and prayer can help you triumph over disease*. Simon and Schuster, New York 1999

8 Peter Fenwick, “Can we still recommend meditation?” *BMJ* vol 287, 12/11/83, 1401

9 Helen Leathard, “Healing in the Christian tradition” in *Sacred Space*, Vol 4, issue 2, 2003, 36

10 Laurence Freeman, *Meditation and Dying*. Novalis, 1991.

Sanskrit Corner - Meditation

Ken Knight. hilken_98@yahoo.com

The Kaivalya Upanishad begins:

Then Asvalayana approached the Lord Parameshti and said, "Oh Bhagavan, teach me the highest science of reality....." To him the grandsire said, "Know this by means of faith, devotion and meditation."

The Sanskrit terms for those last three words are: *sraddha*, *bhakti* and *dhyana*. They are linked because one leads to the next. The first comes from a root meaning listening and when we move out of the usual stream of thoughts on a myriad of personal concerns we find ourselves in a place where patient listening is possible. To stay in that place requires single-minded devotion from which a state of meditation arises.

A question often arises as to whether in meditation we focus on a named quality of God or on the ineffable mystery beyond all name. To answer this two more terms are of use to us: *saguna brahman* and *nirguna brahman*. The former is the more common as it means that the mind focuses on a particular attribute for brahman such as *Father*, the *Compassionate*, the *Merciful* or as the *playful Cowherd*. Abhishiktatnanda, in his book 'Prayer', chapter 12, writes on the use of *Abba* as a mantra.

Nirguna brahman focuses on *brahman* beyond all name or form and was Abhishiktananda's later aim.

Arjuna is always pestering Krishna to tell him which is the best path and he is always gently told not to be so silly and listen. So the *Bhagavad Gita* begins Chapter 12 - the Yoga of Devotion, with Arjuna wanting to know which is the better of what he sees as two paths. Krishna's reply is:

"Those who are eternally steadfast, who worship Me, fix-

ing their minds on Me, endowed with supreme faith; I consider them to be the most devoted to Me. But those who honour the imperishable, the indefinable, the unmanifest, the all-pervading, the unthinkable, the unchanging, the immovable, the eternal, controlling all the senses, even-minded on all sides, rejoicing in the welfare of all creatures, they also attain Me."



Ken Knight replying to a question at the Prinknash Advent Retreat.

In those verses are faith, devotion and meditation. *Dhyana* is the word used for meditation by the *Kaivalya Upanishad* and by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*, 3.2, where he describes it as an unbroken flow of thoughts in a single object.

The Vedantin tradition, as expounded by Shankara, uses the word *upasana* for meditation and in his commentary on the *Gita* verses above, Shankara uses this word and describes it thus:

'*Upasana* means approaching an object of meditation as presented by the scriptures, making it an object of one's own thought, and dwelling on it uninterruptedly for long by continuing the same current of thought with regard to it - like a stream of oil poured from one vessel to another.'

Both the words *dhyana* and *upasana* can give us more guidance when we examine the different sounds that make up the words. Such a practice may be speculative and the following is from my own personal study and can be dismissed accordingly if you so wish.

Dhyana can be seen to have a basic sound, *dhi*. *Dhi* is an aspect of mind that is the essential source of spiritual insight. It is a *Rgvedic* term and I would like to write a book on it.

Upasana has the prefix *upa* which means 'near, towards, beside' and as such has to do with 'sitting'. So *upasana* can mean 'sitting near or beside' but it contains much more as within those Sanskrit words there are elements of patient and sincere waiting, fortitude and service, all essential elements in meditation.

Much more can be written on these words by you, through your practice and study.

Study Days with Ken

Many found the scripture study sessions at Prinknash with Ken Knight extremely rewarding, exciting both an interest in the Sanskrit language and the Vedantic scriptures.

Ken has offered to lead a study day looking at the *Gita* and *Upanishads* and would like to hear from anyone who would like to take part. On the basis of the response it can be decided when and where to hold such a day.

Please contact him at his email address above or on 01689 861004.

Caldey Silent Retreat, September 2006

The ancient Celts believed that islands were special places where the barrier separating this world from the next were thin. That is why so many Welsh islands succour sacred sites, and maybe that is why this year's Caldey Island silent retreat was so heavenly.

Eleven intrepid souls gathered at Tenby harbour early one Tuesday morning where we met by Johanna Walters who had arranged the retreat. A twenty minute mailboat journey with each gentle wave washing away our cares and chatter and turning us into peaceful pilgrims.



The Crossing

We arrived at St Philomena's retreat house, and until nine that night we talked and got to know each other; created our shrine, and then Namajapa (chanting the name of God) and then into silence, following a daily routine similar to Shantivanam. A tap on the door of our monkish cell at 06:30. Guyatri mantra greeting the dawn from a cliff overlooking the sea, Group meditation, followed by bhajans, chants and readings and breakfast.

Eating silently is wonderful. Paying attention to the food, eating with love and gratitude for the earth's bounty. So different from a hurried bite in a harried time. So much better for you.



St Philomena's Retreat House

Then a walking meditation - the slow tempo helping the ego-brain to relax into contemplative rhythms. We bow to each other at the end, no need for words. Some days the boats bring



The Cistercian Abbey on Caldey

holiday makers from Tenby, but the island absorbs them without losing its air of other worldliness. We were blessed by warm weather, but an east wind was enough to cancel the tourist boats for three of our days here.

In the afternoons Johanna and Aileen organised some activities for us. Brother David invited us to the monastery to listen to his poetry, hear about life in the monastery, and see the amazing 'body of Christ' carved from one piece of wood. Brother Gildas met us at the old Priory to talk



Brother Gildas speaking on Celtic Christianity

about the history of Celtic worship of God. Aileen guided us in working meditatively to make beads for contemplation. With Johanna, who is a great friend of his, some of us visited the retired Abbot, Father Robert in the Monastery and listened to his amusing and wise counsel. We visited Sister Dolores, Caldey's hermit nun, to hear of her life and her poetry. Another talk from Brother Gildas at the old Norman church about the history of the island and the monastery.

Johanna making a point to Father Robert



In the evenings we recreated. One evening of poetry, some of it our own. One evening of music and meditative mandala colouring followed by an eyes-open meditation on what you have created. One evening Fr Bede spoke to us through his letters read to us by Adrian from the book he has recently published. Then namajapa and so to bed.



Conversation with Sister Dolores

Or we could (and some did) follow the monk's daily routine. Seven services and one mass from Vigils at 03:30 to Compline at 19:30.

On our last evening Tim told us about Sanskrit, the language that held the word of God before the scriptures, and taught us how to say 'Om'. Then Adrian and John presided over our closing ceremonies around Aileen's Caldey mandala. We ended with a beach bonfire made from all our mandalas and some other bits that the island offered.



Aileen making the Mandala

As we left on the mailboat next morning Tony Robinson and the Time Team entourage arrived. Watch out for their Caldey special, you might see some of the magic of Caldey that we all enjoyed.

Martin Neilan

Farewell to Prinknash - the Advent Retreat at St Peter's Grange December 2006

The Sangha has been holding its Advent Retreat at St Peter's Grange for 10 years and there was a special poignancy to this one as it was to be the last.

Later this year the Monks of the community will be returning to St Peter's Grange from the Monastery - clearly an emotional time for them and this was evident in the sincere words from Abbot Father Francis and Father Aldhelm after Eucharist on the Sunday. For all that it was a fulfilling and memorable occasion as these two accounts will testify.

On arriving at the beautiful setting of St Peter's Grange I felt the warm welcome of the Sangha. Being my first time I had had expectations of trepidation and a feeling of being new. These expectations were immediately dissipated as the heart of the Sangha wrapped me within it.

At the time of introductions, after the beautiful ritual of meditation and chanting. I could experience a real listening within me. I was aware of the individuals talking but there was such an overwhelming sense of oneness. This I have never experienced in a group before.

Ken Knight then brought me to a complete standstill with his beautiful delivery of what silence to sound could mean. I said at the time that I couldn't repeat to anyone what he said but it all sits in my heart filtering through, feeding me. I truly felt awash with peace as he spoke. A knowing within.

I was moved to tears when he said 'when you are in turmoil or anguish and you cry "Lord" - it is the Lord who cries'. I had heard this before with my ears but not with my heart.

After all the sessions with Ken I felt that a weight had been lifted and I had been relieved then filled. A sort of feeling you get when you weep buckets. Gentle, quiet peace.

On Saturday evening I was very happy to be part of Trevor's Indian square dance. It highlighted the Dance of Life present amongst prayer sharing and silence. The



Father Aldhelm and Abbot Father Francis with members of the Sangha.

laughter and Love were so uplifting.

My weekend was a pure gift shared with a wonderful group of people truly in the One.

Amanda Moss

The moment one turns off the main road and swings along the lane that winds down to the great oblong fronted Abbey of Prinknash the atmosphere changes. The silent hills enfold you as you drive, even, I found, the very sound of the car's motor becomes subdued. Each time I come here I am conscious of another, more subtle reality.

This weekend retreat proved to be a different, deeper experience for many of us. We spoke of it to each other, snippets of conversation were caught in passing; the experience moved many hearts. The core 'theme' was Silence, but the retreat was not held in silence, rather, it was upheld in silence. Tim and Victoria, each our compass, held the space so gracefully, so unobtrusively, allowing the sacredness of our experience to surface. The Unseen was given validity, allowed to express itself. In this resonance we found our interaction with each other in deeper and more meaningful ways.

Ken Knight's openhearted sharing of the deeper verities of silence and sound within and beyond Sanskrit mantra, touched many people, its depths clarifying with the subtleties of its language that which can rarely be expressed in either English or Christian theology. Not because such depths are absent, but because we no

longer have access to a language with which to speak of Mystery. Centuries ago art was didactic, art told of the mysteries, for art was then for God's sake, as art continued to be so in India. But words have failed us. I am always moved to another level of being when I chant the mantras of antiquity, taught me years ago when I lived in India within an authentic spiritual discipline, or when I hear the Hymns to the Panaghia (Holy Mary) sung in ancient Greek.

Perhaps too the weekend was charged with a particular poignancy beneath the surface of our being guests. It is the last time we can be together in this very special building for the monks are coming home to St Peter's Grange some time next year. It is right that this is so, and we will hold our memories of being here year after year, especially dear.

Zoé d'Ay



Angels in the Prinknash Chapel

Shantivanam - Some impressions of our visit to the Centenary Celebrations.

Nick and Mary Sadler

Before leaving home our excitement at the prospect of experiencing the place where Father Bede lived for 35 years was tinged with trepidation. How would we manage in an environment stripped of most, if not all the comforts we are used to? Then we thought, if a rather refined English gentleman brought up in middle England and educated at Oxford can live there gloriously for so long, who were we to worry?

The Ashram itself is set in woodland with palm trees, banana plants and other tropical vegetation providing welcome shade. At night a huge poplar beside the path to our room was a mass of twinkling fire flies. The various huts and buildings are of very basic design but the principle ones, namely the gateway, chapel, old and new meditation halls and library were a beautiful amalgam of East and West. There is perhaps surprisingly little to commemorate Father Bede apart from a few faded

all for very poor children and young people. This is run by Sister Rose, a lovely and inspiring lady who has also recently procured a new building due to open shortly as a day centre for the elderly and HIV/aids victims. Then another primary school known as Bless and finally another computer training school run by a young man who did his training at Sister Rose's school. It was humbling to meet these happy and smiling boys and girls and to enjoy such warm hospitality from those who have materially so little.

We soon found ourselves immersed in the daily rhythm and spiritual life of the Ashram. with services three times a day, twice daily meditation and an hour's talk each day by Brother Martin which was always wide ranging and deeply nourishing.

The climax of the second week was the centenary celebrations for Fr Bede. For three days we heard heart-felt reminiscences from various peo-

There is so much more we could write particularly about the wonderful people we met who had come from many parts of the World but we think we have probably said enough -who knows perhaps to whet the appetite of others to visit Shantivanam "Forest of Peace"

(There will be a fuller report of events of the Shantivanam Centenary Celebrations in the next issue.)

Nick Saddler also sent this poem which he copied from one pinned to the Wall in Father Bede's hut with the covering note: "The print was faded and not easy to read. It was undated but presumably composed when he was alive. I found it quite haunting."

Father,

You are in the palm of God
through the quality and experience
of your spirituality,
You resemble the plant which has
grown a thousand ages.

Humility is your school
Love and virtues are the lessons you
taught there;
Many are the pupils who come to
learn
The lessons of wholeness.

Dayananda is your name;
Daya - The mother with Karuna
Ananda - bliss;
How colourful is your name.

You are:
A loving mother for the destitute,
Shanti for seekers of Shanti,
Bliss- sharing friend;
Therefore your name is most apt!

The real bhakta of God are you,
Who, with fire burning in your
heart,
Can share with others.

Silence is the instrument,
Enthusiasm is your land,
You are a pearl
Who ploughs the land with the
instrument of silence
To get these three fruits:
Sincerity, humility and simplicity.

On this your golden birthday
My wish is for your life to continue
many years yet,
In the service of humanity,
Like the sun rising

Br. Gerald Peter



The Meeting Pavilion and Guests

photographs in the dining hall, his hut stripped of almost all his few possessions and his grave alongside the original founders Jules Monchanin and Henri Le Saux (Abishiktananda) and also Father Amaldas.

During our first week we were privileged to visit three social projects supported by the Ashram and the Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust. Firstly the Sri Bede Dayananda Trust complex in the nearby village comprising a primary school, computer training facility and tailoring classes

ple who had met him. The lives of all who spoke were changed for ever as a result of their encounters. On 17 December a very special service was held in Fr Bede's memory and we all gathered afterwards at his grave which was bedecked with garlands and candles. There followed a lively party for upwards of 500 children when much food, fun and games were had by all.

A fitting end to an inner and outer journey that we will always treasure.

Miracles in Muttom - report in the work of the Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust

Do you believe in miracles? Well I do. Just under eighteen months since the Tsunami hit the fishing village of Muttom in South India, Sr Selvi and 25 children from the village were able to move into the purpose built St Adrian's Reachout Centre on 31st August. Thanks to the wonderful generosity of so very many people, the Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust has been able to help Selvi and her trustees buy an acre of land overlooking the sea just outside the village. Michael a delightful person and excellent designer and builder has built a truly beautiful building to house the Centre. The children and Sr Selvi are so thrilled with their new accommodation having managed for nearly a year in a very small four roomed house that leaked! The rains have been very heavy this year.

Sr Selvi has her own room with a bathroom and there is a children's dormitory or rather one for girls and one for boys, with their own washroom and loos. An unheard of luxury for these children. (Bathrooms put the price up!). A kitchen and dining area, a chapel and meditation room, office, computer and tailoring rooms, staff bedroom and a guest room for visitors to stay and enjoy the St Adrian's Reachout Centre. Selvi writes to say the children are also so excited to have so much garden to play in and each child has planted a coconut tree and has to keep it watered and loved! The cost of buying the land and doing the building work has been about £50,000! Yes truly a miracle. Thank you so much to



Children at the New Centre

everyone who has so generously donated money to make this happen. The Reachout Centre will be officially Inaugurated on 9 January the feast day of St Adrian of Canterbury and if anyone would like to come to visit at any time, you would be most welcome. Please contact Sr Selvi sarcelvi@hotmail.com and she and the children will be so happy to see you.

If you cannot visit, then the next best thing could be to go online to our brand new website www.muttom.com and follow the progress of the project on the web. Read the children's stories, the programme and vision of the Reachout Centre, learn about life in a fishing village, see the pictures and add your own comments and observations. Adrian and I are off to Muttom on 7 November to help with the preparations and will certainly post information on the new website.

If you would like to make a donation towards the running costs roughly £6000 per year then do please get in touch with us: *The Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust, Beech Tree Cottage, Selling,*

Kent ME13 9RH UK

jill.hemmings@btinternet.com

Standing orders are particularly wonderful! We should love to hear from you.

Love Jill and Adrian

Falling in Love with India

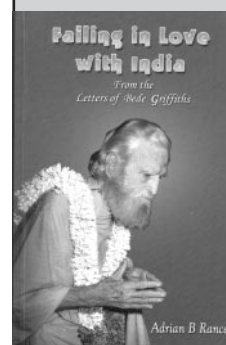
From the Letters of Bede Griffiths

Adrian B Rance (ed). 420 pp.
(Shantivanam Ashram 2006).

Available in the UK from
Beech Tree Cottage, Selling,
Faversham, Kent, ME13 9RH. Price
£10 + £2.00 p and p.
adrian.b.rance@btinternet.com
01227 752871

Cheques made payable to 'The Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust'

(Please note that all income from the sale of these books goes to support the life of the ashram and the charitable work of the ashram with the poor in surrounding villages. So you may like to consider adding a donation.)



Sangha News

News from Fr Cyprian Consiglio and our Sister Sangha in California.

*Greetings from the Further Shore!
Well. . . at least from across the Pond.
Timothy asked me to write a few
words about our sister Sangha in
America. We have been in existence
now just over a year. My original
inspiration came from two places.
First, I had conducted an eight part
series called "Spirit, Soul and Body:
The Universal Call to
Contemplation" at a parish in Santa
Cruz, California where I was filling
in for the pastor who was on sabbati-
cal for six months. The series was
an introduction to meditation based
in a large part on the teachings of Fr
Bede and Abhishiktananda, drawing
from Universal Wisdom and even
employing a version of the Samdhya
(liturgy) used at Shantivanam.*

*It was a wonderful success, and drew
folks from many different traditions,
as we had hoped. It culminated in a
New Year's Eve Inter-religious
Meditation Vigil for Peace. As that
graced period was coming to an end,
some of the regular folks made it
known to me that this was not
enough, that it had to continue in
some way. I carried that thought with
me as I headed to India immediately
afterward. There I met Jill and
Michael for the first time, and they
told me all about the Bede Griffiths
Sangha in England. And I knew
immediately that this was what was
needed in the States as well. That
Spring I gathered some like minded
people and friends and we have slow-
ly nursed our group into being.*

*We call ourselves Sangha
Shantivanam. We meet twice a
month on Sunday evenings. We rent
two adjoining rooms in the basement
of an old school, one side is our med-
itation and prayer room, and the
other is our reading, meeting and eat-*

*ing room. The format of our meetings
is structured around the same
Shantivanam liturgy, though after the
Scripture reading we have an extend-
ed time of teaching and discussion, a
short break and then a period of med-
itation. We have set about studying
various texts together, starting with
Fr Bede's "New Creation in Christ,"
and then William Johnson's fine book
"Arise My Love." We since then have
embarked on pretty serious study of
traditions other than Chirstianity.
Our first period has been devoted to
Hinduism, a long section on the
Upanishads, then the Yoga Sutras
and currently we are working through
the Bhagavad Gita. In the early win-
ter we will begun a long section on
Buddhism.*

*There is a steady core of about 30
people, with others coming and
going. We have discussed the possi-
bility of limiting entry into group, but
have gladly decided that the door is
always to remain open to anyone at
any time. We are very clear that our
purpose is serious practice as well as
serious study of the Marriage of East
and West, and so it does happen that
when people see the level of commit-
ment on the part of the regular mem-
bers at times they realize that it is not
for them. On November 19 we (will
hold/held) a ceremony for a dozen
members of the Sangha who wish to
make a deeper commitment to the
group for the period of a year in
terms of service, attendance and daily
practice. Some of the members will
be joining the pilgrimage to
Shantivanam and Tiruvanmalai this
winter. We also plan on holding our
second annual retreat in mid-
February. We are blessed to have the
support of the Camaldolese congre-
gation, specifically the community of
New Camaldoli in Big Sur,
California, and count on your
prayers and solidarity as well.*

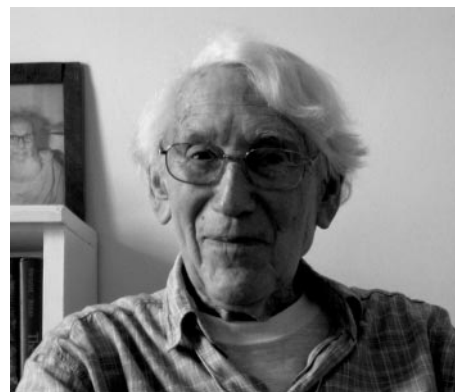
Cyprian cyprianconsiglio@sbcglobal.net

News from the Working Group:

As reported in the September
Newsletter, the Sangha is now
directed by a group of members
under the coordination of Jane
Lichnowski. They liaise on a
regular basis and meet every few
months - the next meeting is on
17th March in Cirencester.
If anyone would like to help with
the running of the Sangha they are
urged to contact Jane, whose
contact details are on the back
page.

On the opposite page you will see
details of coming events.

Reverend Murray Rogers



Members of the Sangha will be sad to
hear of the death of Murray Rogers
last year. He was a great friend of
the Sangha and many will recall his
talk at Park Place in 2004, recalling
his friendship with Abhishiktananda.
Shirley du Boulay writes: In 1953,
during his time in India where he
lived for many years, Murray set up
the Jyotiniketan Ashram, a frugal,
prayerful community. He
subsequently lived in Jerusalem,
Hong Kong and Canada before
returning to Oxford where he died.
He was a man of great charisma and
vision who was passionately
committed to the poor and who made
an important contribution to interfaith
dialogue.

COMING EVENTS**'HERMITS IN COMPANY'**

**The Stanton Guildhouse, Stanton, Broadway, Worcs.
May 4 – 7th 2007**

For our spring silent retreat we are returning to the Stanton Guildhouse, a beautiful centre in the north Cotswolds, with superb views across the valley, over the village of Stanton and towards the Welsh mountains. More details of the centre can be found at www.stantonguildhouse.org.uk

The phrase 'Hermits in Company' captures the essence of our intention, which is to facilitate a quiet contemplative weekend where we can gather, mostly in silence, free to use the unstructured time as we wish, coming together for times of meditation, chanting and reading of scripture from different traditions. Our venue offers wonderful opportunities for walking and simply being.

The core of the retreat will be a gentle silence. This is an opportunity to move away from everyday busyness and distractions, to be with ourselves and each other in a different way, allowing us to extend the quietness and stillness of meditation into all areas of life.

This is a 'DIY retreat', participants will be asked to contribute to readings at prayer times and to simple catering and house-keeping activities. The Guildhouse can accommodate 13 people in simple shared rooms. There are no ensuite facilities. It is hoped to accommodate 2 others in a nearby guest house. We will be self catering, with vegetarian food. The retreat will begin early evening on Friday and finish after lunch on Monday. The cost will be £118. The retreat is being organized by Jane & Andy Lichnowski and John & Ingrid Careswell.

*If you would like to come, or have any queries please contact Jane Lichnowski 82 Gloucester Road, Cirencester. Glos. GL7 2LJ
Tel 01285 – 651381 email jane@lichnowski.com*

A non-refundable deposit of £25 (made payable to The Bede Griffiths Sangha) will be required. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements which we will do our best to accommodate.

NB Please be aware that much interest has already been shown in this retreat following its announcement in the last newsletter, however there are a few places remaining.

Park Place Summer Retreat

Park Place Pastoral Centre, Fareham, Hants.

Friday 20th July - Sunday 22nd 2007

"Who do people think Jesus Christ was?"
with Brother Martin Sahajananda

*Information from: Nick Sadler, Box Farm House, Birlingham,
Pershore, WR10 3AB 01386 751443 nicksadler@dsl.pipex.com
See booking form with this Newsletter.*

Caldey Silent Retreat

10th September - 17th September 2007

Full details in the Summer Newsletter.

*To make a provisional reservation contact Johanna Walters, Church
House, Steynton, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire SA73 1AW 01646 692496
johanna@merci-beaucoup.co.uk*

Sangha Advent Retreat

The Ammerdown Centre, Radstock, Bath.

Friday 7th - Sunday 9th December 2007

To make a provisional reservation contact:

*Victoria Glazier, 2 Tynnings Road, Nailsworth, Glos GL6 0EJ
01453 839488 victoria@timothyglazier.com*

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS**Pilgrimage to the sacred Mount Kailash in Tibet**

Dates to be finalised, but will fall between June and October 2007. This holy place is sacred to all traditions that have encountered it: Hindu, Buddhist and Jain.

More details from

Francis Kundert at francispkdevon@hotmail.com

Buddhist Christian Vedanta Network

The Buddhist Christian Vedanta Network, (formerly the Buddhist Christian Network) organised by Sangha Member Elizabeth West, is a resource for those who are on a spiritual journey using the resources of more than one faith. For more details visit:

www.buddhist-christian.org or email ewest@ahs.org.uk

CD's from the Centenary Gathering at Gaunts House.

A 4 CD set of the talks at Gaunts by Revd Professor Keith Ward, Caitlin Matthews and Timothy Freke, together with the musical meditation presented by Father Cyprian Consiglio.

A VISION FOR THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

Talks by:

Revd Prof Keith Ward

Caitlin Matthews

Timothy Freke

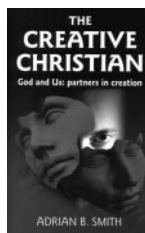
Musical Meditation with
Father Cyprian Consiglio

£20 including postage in the UK.
Make Cheque payable to the Bede Griffiths Sangha.

*From: Timothy Glazier
2 Tynnings Road, GL6 0EJ
01453 839488
tim@timothyglazier.com*

THE CREATIVE CHRISTIAN**God and Us: Partners in Creation**

*This is a new book by Sangha Member
Adrian B Smith.*



"The world is crying out for a new vision, a new way of ordering the world. Actually we have a very relevant one - it's that of Jesus of Nazareth.

Adrian Smith challenges us to partner God in being co-creative in our world of increasingly rapid change."

Published by O Books, ISBN 1905047754

and available from good booksellers. £11.99.

Contact Adrian for details of this and his other books, 02476 344983

adrianbsmith@talktalk.net.

FOR COPIES OF FATHER BEDE'S BOOKS, VIDEOS AND CD'S:**The Inner Bookshop of Oxford,**

111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford OX4 1RQ Tel. 01865-245301

www.innerbookshop.com

World Community for Christian Meditation

St. Mark's, Myddelton Square, London EC1R 1XX

0207 278 2070 Email: mail@wccm.org

Sangha Contacts

Sangha Contact and Welcome

Johanna Walters, Church House, Steynton, Milford Haven,
Pembs SA73 1AW 01646 692496
johanna@merci-beaucoup.co.uk

Sangha Web Site www.bede-griffiths-sangha.org.uk

Sangha Working Group

Jane Lichnowski, 82 Gloucester Road, Cirencester, GL7 2LJ
01285 651381 jane@lichnowski.com

Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust

Jill Hemming, Beech Tree Cottage, Gushmere, Selling, Kent,
ME 13 9RH. 01227 752871. jill.hemmings@btinternet.com
bg.trust@btinternet.com

Editor of the Newsletter

Timothy Glazier, 2 Tynings Road, Nailsworth, Glos GL6 0EJ
01453 839488 tim@timothyglazier.com

UK Contact with Shantivanam

Michael Giddings 07810 366860 or
mjgiddings2002@yahoo.co.uk

Regional and Overseas Contacts and Groups

England

Beds: Bedford - Peter Forrest 01234 831361 Bucks:
Marlow - Michael Day 01628 482415

Cornwall: Penzance - Swami Nityamuktananda
01736 350510

Devon: Exeter - Joan Uzzells 01392 276825
Totnes - Francis Kundert 07909 987911
francispkdevon@hotmail.com

Dorset: Michael Giddings 07810 366860 or
mjgiddings2002@yahoo.co.uk

Essex: Chris Collingwood 0208 501 5771

Gloucestershire: Timothy and Victoria Glazier
01453 839488
Meditation Group Mondays 6.30.

Kent: Canterbury, Jill & Adrian 01227 752871
*Meditation Group 1st Fri each month
7.15 p.m.*

London N4 - Ann O'Donoghue 0207 359 1929

London SE (Kent) - Hilary Knight 0168 986 1004
Meditation Group Wednesdays 7.30.

London N/Herts - Edgar Holroyd-Doveton
020 8386 4323

Norfolk: Chris Smythe 01493 664725

Northants: Henry Worthy 01604 513032
Meditation group Thurs at 8 p.m.

Oxon: Oxford - Shirley du Boulay
shirley.harriott3@btopenworld.com

Somerset: Taunton - Valeria Ives 01823 432468
Bath - Kevin Tingay 01761 470249

Staffs: Stoke on Trent - Sr Sophia 01782 816036

Suffolk: Wendy Mulford 01728 604169

W. Sussex: Gillian Maher 01444 455334
Chichester - Therese O'Neill 01730 814879
Meditation Group 2nd Wed of each month.

Worcs Nich & Mary Saddler. 01386 751443

Yorks: Barnsley: Margaret Cadnam
01226 217042 Group

Northern Ireland

Ballyhornan: Stan Papenfus 02844 841451

Scotland

Aberdeen: Angelika Monteux 01224 867409
Glasgow: Steve Woodward 01355 224937
Edinburgh: Laird McLean 0131 478 1673
Easter Ross: Revd George Coppen 01862 842381
gcoppen@tiscali.co.uk

Wales

West Wales: Joan Walters 01646 692496
Mid Wales: Jonathan Robinson (Montgomery)
01588 620779
Philip Francis (Holywell) 01352 711620

Channel Islands Jersey:

Sean Arnold. 01534 747643.
seanwalter@uku.co.uk

Overseas contacts

Argentina Magdalena Puebla.
malen_puebla@hotmail.com

Australia Andrew Howie iona@netspace.net.au
East St Kilda - Samantha Semmens
Ssemmens@trinity.unimelb.edu.au
Carlos Carranza.
carloscarranza@hotmail.com

Denmark Vicky Lasheras: lasheras@frbpost.dk

Eire Michael Woods +35 312 888075

France Nerte Chaix michoule2@wanadoo.fr

Germany Sabine Deller sabine.deller@freenet.de

India Br. Martin: brothermartin111@hotmail.com
Meditation Group Weds 7.30p.m.

Italy Mario la Floresta laflor_1@libero.it

Malta Godwin Genovese shine@vol.net.mt

New Zealand Kevin Moran, Christchurch
s.friend@paradise.net.nz

USA Florida - Michael Spillane
mspillane@legalaidpubc.org
Oklahoma - Carolyn Cowan:
ccmission@cox.net
Nevada Jackie Greedy 775 883 0854

California Santa Barbara - Nicholas Dewey
805 898 0865
Big Sur - Father Cyprian Consiglio
cyprianconsiglio@sbcglobal.net

If any one would like to have their names added as local contacts please let us know. Please also let us have details of any meditation groups you would like included.

RETURN ADDRESS

**The Bede Griffiths Sangha
82 Gloucester Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 2LJ**