

The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

Autumn 2007 Volume 10 Issue 4

“Inter-spirituality”

I have only just come across the expression “inter-spirituality - rather than “interfaith”, but thought, when I heard it, that it summed up what the Sangha is about. We are not an organisation for debating or comparing dogma and creed but, as the statement sets out below, the Sangha is “committed to the search for truth at the heart of all religions”. At this level, beyond belief systems, to the “ground” - so often spoken of by Father Bede - one can find the common link of all humanity, indeed of the entire universe.

Appropriate to this theme, in this Newsletter we have the beautiful account by Adrian Rance of the role Father Bede played in his life - leading to his own new vocation. Ken Knight’s Sanskrit Corner speaks of the “fullness” and the “void”. We have two experiential articles on meditation and one on how Father Bede is being acknowledged in Russia as well as extracts from Br Martin’s remarkable paper asking the question “Who do people say Jesus Christ is?” and, as usual, Sangha news and reports, coming events and national and international contact details.

Timothy Glazier tim@timothyglazier.com

CONTENTS:

Father Bede in my life	2/3
Sanskrit Corner	4
Our Natural State	5
Eyes wide open	6
3 Fathers in Russia	7
Who do people say Jesus Christ is?	8
Retreat reports	9
Sangha Events	10
Resources	11
Contacts	12

“Father Bede in my life”

Adrian Rance recounts the influence of Father Bede in his life - from the name he was Christened with, to his new vocation as an Interfaith Minister and Acting Director at The Abbey at Sutton Courtney.

See pages 2 and 3.

Father Bede in England in the 1960’s



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



“Who do people say Jesus Christ is?”

Brother Martin asks this challenging question in two remarkable talks at the Sangha Park Place Summer Retreat. CDs of these talks and the paper upon which they were based are available to order.

See page 9.



Brother Martin at Park Place

STOP

FOR JUST ONE DAY

JUST THIS DAY 28th November 2007

A wonderful international initiative in tune with the aims of the Sangha.

“Go beyond nationality, religion or belief and remember the still, silent presence where everything is united. That space is the same. In Cities or fields.

Up mountains or in valleys. In work, study or play. In fortune or adversity. In peace or conflict. In fact wherever YOU are.”

WWW.JUSTTHISDAY.ORG

Father Bede in my life

Adrian Rance adrian.b.rance@btinternet.com

On 4th August this year I was ordained as an Interfaith Minister by the Interfaith Seminary in London¹. I decided to take for myself an ordained name and so I was ordained Charles Rance. I took the name to honour my mother who wanted to call me Charles after her great friend the poet and novelist Charles Williams who had died a few months before I was born in 1945. But Father Bede was not keen and he wrote to my father, "I am so glad that all is well with Dorothy and the child: I must say I don't like Charles – it is a horrible name – though out of piety to the memory of Charles Williams I would have tolerated it – Adrian Bede sounds good!"²

And so it was due to Father Bede I was called Adrian and not Charles and my adoption of this name on my ordination is just the latest step in my life-long relationship with Father Bede – even if this time I was overturning his wishes.

My father, Toby Rance, went to Prinknash Priory (as it was then) in 1941 to recuperate from an illness. He wrote that, "I have met a most remarkable man here, Dom Bede"³. My mother met Father Bede shortly afterwards and they both became deep friends with him – in fact I would say that they both probably fell in love with him.



Fr Bede and Christodas on the tower of Castle Combe Church, Wiltshire, England. 1960's.



Fr Bede with my mother and the children, left to right, Christopher, Francesca, Anthony, Adrian and Julian.

Christopher, my eldest brother, often spent his holidays at Prinknash, Father Bede was my sister Francesca's godfather, and I was named after him, causing him to write to my mother, "I can't say I am very sorry that it is a boy: it makes your family exactly like mine, 2 boys and a girl and me last, so that it is very appropriate that he should be named after me. Thank you for thinking of it. It is a good name and he could not have a better patron."

Of course I can't remember much of Father Bede in these early years. I have a very clear recollection of him when we visited Pluscarden in 1952, and I have a dim recollection of sitting in the parlour at Farnborough – for some reason I recall the wonderful gas lamp in the parlour and playing in the hay barn in the farm.

Then Father Bede went to India and my parents were very upset at his going away. On his visits back to England he would stay with them at their home in Beaconsfield or, later at their cottage in Castle Combe in the Cotswolds. I have a photograph of Father Bede on the top of the church tower at Castle Combe accompanied by Christodas. As one might expect, the site of two monks in the India, khavi, walking around a quintessentially picturesque Cotswold village,

caused quite a stir. There was one occasion when he visited the Indian restaurant in Beaconsfield and all the owner's family, including the aged grandparents, were summoned to pay respects to this holy man from India. During these years I was away from home at boarding school or at university so I cannot say that Father Bede was anything other than a familiar presence in my family's life. It was not until 1990 that I decided to go and visit him at his ashram, Shantivanam. At that time I was re-discovering my religion and spirituality after many years of not being interested in such things at all.

When I arrived at Shantivanam for Christmas 1990, people would ask me in the tea circle, "...and why have you come here?" I found that I did not have an answer; actually I did not really know then why I went and I was aware of that. I would just tell people he was an old family friend and that I was named after him. I had one meeting with him in his hut, one afternoon at 4.00, just for half an hour. And that was all. The next time I saw him was after his stroke in January 1993 and of course he did not recognise me at all.

At the centenary celebrations last year, people spoke of Father Bede sowing seeds in their lives that later

flowered into great things. And I think that was what happened in that brief half an hour talk with him. We talked of family matters, nothing spiritual or mystical about that. But I felt a deep joy in my heart afterwards.

I went back to Shantivanam in January 1993 when it seemed that he was going to die, and I spent time helping Sr Marie Louise look after him, joining her rota of watchers who would sit by him throughout the night whilst she took some much needed sleep on the floor of his little hut where he lay.

But the seed had been sown. At that first visit to Shantivanam I met Brother Martin who was to become not only a deep friend but an important influence in my spiritual development, and a great teacher for me. I also met Jill who was to become my wife – although we did not get together until some four years later. Actually we fell in love in the presence of another great spiritual teacher: we were together at the Good Heart Seminary given by the Dalai

Lama for the World Community of Christian Meditation, when that miracle happened.

So the seeds sown by Father Bede were to utterly transform my life and were to lead to Jill and me leading the development of the Bede Griffiths Sangha for some 10 years and, more recently, the Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust.

So what was it that I was looking for when I made that visit to Shantivanam in December 1990? I can see now that I was making a journey to re-connect with important parts of my early life, not only Fr Bede whose name I bear, but also my parents from whom I had become spiritually and psychologically separated, I think when I was sent to boarding school, perhaps sensing that finding Fr Bede was a way back to finding them. My visit was part of a spiritual journey of self-discovery, and Fr Bede turned out to be the figure that could link me to my past and who sowed seeds that were to determine my future.

Now, 17 years later, I am making another step in this journey. One of Fr Bede's great wishes was for the development of contemplative lay communities as part of the spiritual renewal of the West. On 17th September I took up the post of Acting Director at The Abbey at Sutton Courtenay⁴, a retreat centre near Oxford, which is founded in the Christian tradition and open to all other traditions as a centre of spiritual healing and renewal. It is so much in keeping with Fr Bede's vision.

So in an important way I feel I can dedicate this new phase of my life as an Interfaith Minister, and helping develop the life of The Abbey, as a continuation of my life long connection to my dear patron, who I hardly really know, Fr Bede.

¹ www.theinterfaithseminary.com

² *Bede to Toby Rance October 3rd 1945*

³ *Bede to Dorothy Rance 23rd September 1945*

⁴ www.theabbey.uk.com

Falling in love with India

Victoria Glazier

Over the past two weeks I have found Adrian's book, compiled from the letters Fr Bede sent to his friends Dr Mary Allen and Mary Dunbar, a most wonderful read. As Adrian says, it is the story of Bede's arrival in India and his struggle to establish his ideal of monastic life in India, but it is much much more. The letters describe very personal feelings and bodily discomforts as well as deep spiritual guidance and teachings from his own growth and progress.

These letters were written during the years when Adrian did not have contact with Fr Bede and knew very little about him. The letters must have revealed so much as indeed they have for me. I did not ever meet Fr Bede and have always regarded his work as that of a great Prophet. Through this book he has come alive - I now see a very human, determined, monk and scholar, sometimes even naive.

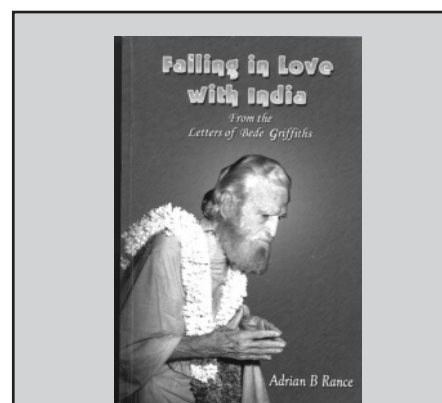
There are too some simply beautiful descriptions of Indian village life:

"We have been saying mass for the Latin Carmelite nuns here for the past few weeks, as their chaplain is ill. It means riding about 2 miles on the bicycle in the early morning when the countryside is most lovely. Everything is very green here and it is a joy for me to ride through these country lanes with their little cottages every few yards and children playing outside and men and women preparing the breakfast.

Every step of the way has its own beauty and originality, nothing is ever commonplace or uninteresting. I come back to this every time – everything is 'according to nature' with the element of surprise which nature always brings. I have never felt such a deep sense of satisfaction. This is what my nature has always craved for – it is just simply right."

Thank you Adrian. Love and Blessings for success and enjoyment in your new vocation.

Victoria



Falling in Love with India From the Letters of Bede Griffiths

Adrian B Rance (ed). 420 pp.
(Shantivanam Ashram 2006).
Available from Medio Media. £10
- see page 11.

Sanskrit Corner: Purna - Fullness

Ken Knight. hilken_98@yahoo.com

Our last Newsletter focused on the importance of silence in spiritual work and this leads naturally to questions about emptiness and nothingness.

'Then you have the void, which is the fullness.' Father Bede WCCM Conference 1991

This statement appears to be paradoxical, linking the 'silence of the void' with abundance, but it is in accord with the Vedic understanding of the word *purna*, a word familiar to Sangha members when chanting:

*"Purnamadah Purnamidam
Purnat Purnamudachyate.
Purnasya Purnamadaya
Purnamevavashisyate."*

*"That is Purna, this is Purna,
Purna comes out of Purna.
If Purna is subtracted from
Purna, still Purna is left."*

While Yeats and Purohit Swami give a translation of *purna* as 'perfect', this can be a little misleading unless we appreciate the other meanings which, more accurately, are 'fullness, abundance.' This is how the word is used in the original RgVedic hymns.

Because we have a dualistic viewpoint we think in terms of 'this and that', 'subject and object'.

What had Father Bede known that allowed him to link the 'void' with 'fullness'? It will help if we listen to some more words of Father Bede when reporting his stroke:

*'I had some breakfast and then I felt sort of restless, disturbed, not knowing quite what was happening. The inspiration came suddenly again to surrender to the Mother. It was quite unexpected: "Surrender to the Mother."
And so I somehow made a surrender to the Mother. Then I had an experience of overwhelming love. Waves of love sort of flowed into me. Judy Walter, my great friend,*

was watching. Friends were beside me all the time. I called out to her, "I'm being overwhelmed by love."

"Death, the Mother, the Void, all was love. It was an overwhelming love, so strong that I could not contain myself. I did not know whether I would survive. I knew "I" had to die, but whether it would be in this world or another, I did not know. At first I thought I would die and just be engulfed in this love. It was the "unconditional love" of which I had often spoken, utterly mysterious, beyond words."

So what is being said when we chant 'That is fullness, this is fullness...'? Clearly it is a statement of love, wholeness or unity and has a mathematical ring to it.

Because we have a dualistic viewpoint we think in terms of 'this and that', 'subject and object'. Through meditation we seek a state of 'emptiness' in the mind and heart that transcends the subject/object relationship, but if we understand the above mantra correctly, that emptiness itself is *purna*, fullness.

So now we have to consider how that emptiness and fullness are similar. The great Vedic etymologist Yaska gave *purna* as a name for zero, while it is also used as a synonym for infinity. Hence, 'take infinity/zero from infinity/zero and you are left with infinity/zero.'

As teenagers we may have asked, 'How can something come out of nothing and will there be nothing at the end of time?' Such thinking may have led us to a concept of God or Brahman, or of a daunting void.

It will help to dissolve any error in our thinking if we consider the history of our concept of zero. We may know its origin with the Arabic 'zifr' but the concept began, as Arab mathematicians acknowledge, with the Sanskrit 'shunyam', void. Those who have read some Zen Buddhism will recognize the similar word 'sunyatta' meaning the void.

'Shunyam' can also mean that it has no beginning and no end, therefore it is reasonable to represent this as a circle, as we do in our number system. However, as in the Arabic 'zifr', the Sanskrit 'shunyam' was represented by a dot. In the earliest writings this dot was known as 'pujyam' which, while meaning void, also means worshipful and it is now that we can get nearer to understanding the Vedic concept of the void.

That void is brahman, it is a fullness, it is purna. So emptiness and fullness are both brahman and that is the point of the shanti mantra.

That void is brahman, it is a fullness, it is *purna*. So emptiness and fullness are both brahman and that is the point of the shanti mantra.

One of the greatest teachers of the 20th century, Sri Anandamayee Ma, sometimes used to sign her name as a dot. When asked why she would reply, "Everything is there."

**Study Day with Ken Knight
Saturday 27th October**

The first Sangha Study Day in the Spring, facilitated by Ken Knight, was richly rewarding for those who attended.

This second Sangha Study Day, which will focus on the Kena Upanishad, gives the opportunity to others to penetrate these remarkable scriptures.

*We will again meet at the beautiful Fintry Trust premises, Brook, nr Godalming, Surrey
www.thefintrytrust.org.uk
We give £10 a head to Fintry Trust to host the day. Contact Ken or Hilary Knight for more details:
Tel. 01689 861004
e-mail: hilken_98@yahoo.com '*

Our Natural State – Intrinsic Freedom

Graham Thwaites

“It is the intensity of the longing that does all the work.” Kabir

In harmony with the theme of ‘non-duality and silence’ in the summer edition I have been stimulated to share with you a few thoughts that have arisen as a result of my meditative practice.

Liberation – Intrinsic Freedom

It is free and spacious, no matter what my external circumstances or internal condition may be. I cannot enhance or degrade it by the presence or absence of thoughts, emotions or sensory stimuli. Reactive emotions and limiting thoughts naturally release themselves without any attachment or resistance.

Silence

I monitor my experience. I start to feel deeper and deeper levels of emotion, thought, sensation. There is no separate activity of ‘meditation’, although to begin with there is. I allow myself to become intimately acquainted with this experience, noticing a sense of wholeness through and beyond all the senses, beyond thought.

Exactng

I experience this as the ‘non-activity’ of being ‘open to creative thought’ and it is most noticeable during a communicative situation. It is a balance between silence and thought. Sometimes I notice it’s opposite as a feeling of needing some level of ‘remedial communication’ after speech, possibly as a result of my speech being the result of a reactive thought pattern. I try to find a balance between one extreme and the next – the shift can be so transparent that I simply find myself already locked into a different perspective. When not polarized I find myself in a very different space, an ideologically neutral environment. I’m left with an experience of naturalness and capacity to be with things as they are.

A Disclosive, Contemplative Space

I experience a space that allows physical presence to be where it is and as it is. It precludes it from being where it is not. It allows thoughts and emotions to emerge and subside as they do i.e. I experience a limb, a thought, hunger, thirst, a sound or an emotion. I notice that they are totally and utterly inseparable from the total experience of being. The sensations from the inside and the outside appear simultaneously and co-dependently until I notice that there isn’t an inside and an outside they are the same experience. My only experience of separation from the environment in which I appear to exist is done intellectually, through language, the language of thought. I notice how often I tend to identify with thought (language) out of habit – *reactivity* – rather than out of my total experience in that moment – *creativity*.

The sensations from the inside and the outside appear simultaneously and co-dependently until I notice that there isn’t an inside and an outside - they are the same experience.

I cannot create this space, I merely discover ‘I Am it’ whether standing, sitting, interacting or washing the dog, I merely watch. I notice that I cannot do more or less of ‘it’ because there isn’t any doing, there is nothing to prolong or nothing to stop. There is no rejection or appropriation of the flow of experience that arises, I am aware of subtle and obvious attractions of attention towards or diversions away from it. These reactions manifest bodily and in thought. I become the ‘watcher’ and experience a freedom from reactive

emotions, with nothing to know or not to know. This does not mean that I just ignore everything (i.e. if I notice fear – this can be an appropriate reaction to a threat to integrity or it may be something very close to it like grief which I mistakenly labelled as fear), my challenge is to neither ignore nor give energy to the habitual reactive tendency to solidify my assumptions or beliefs into fixations.

I experience at a fine and deep level the structures that reveal my preferences and assumptions. I observe at a bodily level any impulse to invade other’s space or create artificial distance. I am aware not to interpret something as reality, and notice that when I do others may mimic my interpretation as reality and then it becomes reality. This is how I solidify something into ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘right’ ‘wrong’ or ‘I am unlovable’ etc. I notice how these structures and beliefs shape the landscape of my every experience, yet their closeness and familiarity makes them invisible to me. My capacity to observe them is obscured by the density and urgency of my thinking and the complexity of my interpersonal activities and relationships. The skill is in catching myself right when I begin to lay down the first brick of a limiting interpretation. I don’t have any resources to draw on other than my own naturalness and capacity to be with things as they are. There is no cover up. I hint at using the word ‘Truth’.

There can be a subtle embodiment of this creativity, a perspective that supports a more spacious and serene way of being. I notice a spontaneous release of reactive emotions occurring as a natural consequence of identifying with ‘awareness-as-such’, the ‘I am’, something terribly authentic and beautiful. *Such Love emanates from this place and I become It.*

With Eyes wide Open: a Catholic Priest sits Zazen **Father Patrick Eastman**

Way back in the 1960's, when a number of Christians were going to Yamada Kuan Roshi, a great Zen master in Kamakura, Japan, he asked them whether there was something lacking in Christianity or was there some dissatisfaction with Christianity that made them turn to practicing Zen. Similarly I have been asked on more than one occasion why I practice Zen. It's not an easy question to answer!

For me it all began when I was acting as chaplain to the Benedictine sisters at their Ashram at Osage Monastery in Oklahoma. (This Ashram was fashioned after Father Bede's ashram at Shantivanam in India and he came to America to bless it.) This was a wonderful experience for me for when I became a married Roman Catholic priest in 1984 and left my Anglican parish to live in Tulsa I had been a Benedictine Oblate for almost twenty years. Benedictine spirituality therefore had been a central part of my life for many years. For quite a few years I had followed the practice of Centering Prayer as taught by Fr. Thomas Keating and Contemplative Outreach. With this as a background I very naturally participated in a Zen retreat (sesshin) lead by Dr Ruben Habito, a Zen Roshi for the community and friends of Osage Monastery.

The experience seemed to provide me with a very definitive practice of silent sitting which I found helpful albeit quite challenging. I had found that although the Christian mystical tradition had considerable references commending contemplation, it provided little practical teaching. This is really hardly surprising of course and it cannot really be learned by reading about it in books but only through the teaching and guidance of a qualified teacher. For me Zen provided an ancient practice where for 2,500 years or so the central core of their religious practice was silent sitting (Zazen). But, you may well ask; isn't Zen part of the Buddhist religion? I certainly had to address this question at the beginning for myself. In answer both Yamada Koan and Ruben Habito and many others all assured me that Zen is not a religion. Yamada Roshi puts it this way:

Zen is not a religion and you do not have to think of it as such, in the

sense of a system of beliefs and concepts and practices. You do not have to throw away your Christianity as you come to Zen. I do not intend to make you become Buddhists but to help you to empty yourself in imitation of your Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore I have often been reminded of the difference between East and West where the central religious question in the West is "*What do you believe?*" whereas in the East the important question is "*What is your practice?*" From my own practise over the years I have found the assurances given at the start to be per-

I had found that although the Christian mystical tradition had considerable references commending contemplation, it provided little practical teaching.

fectly true as there is no doubt in my mind that my Zen practice has deepened and enriched my Christian faith. For many years prior to taking on a Zen practice my Christianity was concerned primarily with concepts about God. It was a rather intellectualised belief in certain facts and as a result was very dualistic. I spent much time and energy trying to work out what was right and true and what was wrong and false. Practising Zazen has gradually helped me move much more in the direction of the gospel which simply invites us to enter a different level of consciousness and to be dynamically caught up in the life of Christ. In other words I discovered that the central message of the gospels is the invitation of Jesus to "*follow me*" meaning to become a participant in the life of the One who is "*The Way, the Truth and the Life.*" I have come to know for myself Thomas Merton's words; "*If revelation is regarded simply as a system of truth about God... then Christianity is in effect, reduced to a world view at times a religious philosophy... 'Experience' of the inner meaning of Christian revelation will be necessarily distorted and diminished in such a theological setting...either rather a sense of security*

of one's own correctness... or [it] becomes an experience of anxious hope, a struggle with occasional doubt of the 'right answers' a painful and constant effort to meet the severe demands of morality and law, and a somewhat desperate resource to the sacraments which are there to help the weak who must constantly fall."

So like Merton, Zen for has given me a strong method to put the wordless and imageless prayer of contemplation into practice. Zen has brought me face to face with life and with myself with its ego-centeredness. The great expert and lifelong student of world religions, Mercia Eliade asserts the death of the false self (ego) lies at the heart of all the major world religions. The desire for that to be my whole orientation has been given substance in and through my Zen practice. Zazen does not allow me to analyse or theorize about life but plunges me into full attention in the present moment. In doing so it takes away the fear and anxiety so that it prevents one from living out of the deep centre at the ground of our being.

There is one further and very important aspect of my Zen practice. Through the meetings I had with Fr Bede at Osage Monastery I have felt drawn to personally be committed to the invitation of the Second Vatican Council to practice interreligious dialogue. Zen practice allows me to do just that. It opened up the opportunity to have a month-long residency at the Buddhist Zen Mountain Monastery in Upstate New York with Abbot John Daido Looi and to participate in Sesshins, here in England, with members of the Liverpool Zen centre. As a Dominican sister friend once said "*It may not be much but I do what I can.*"

Father Patrick has retired from his ministry in the Diocese of Tulsa and now lives in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton where, as a Dharma Holder in the Zen White Plum Lineage, he leads a Zen group in Fairford, Gloucestershire. He also helps with on-going formation for the priests of the diocese and gives retreats and spiritual direction. He can recommend helpful books for those interested in discovering more about the Zazen practice. You can reach him through his website www.northwall.plus.com or by email at Patrick@northwall.plus.com

The Three Fathers in Russia

Maxim Demchenko amicabile@yandex.ru

A couple of years ago the names of the three holy Fathers Henri Le Saux, Jules Monchanin and Bede Griffiths remained unfamiliar for Russian audience.

Though in Russia there is a strong and constantly growing interest in Hinduism, the Upanishads, yoga and meditation, and Buddhism is the third traditional religion (along with Christianity and Islam), professed (in the form of Mongolian Lamaism) by 90% of Buryats and Kalmyks, interreligious dialogue has always developed on grass-roots level only: official Churches are still falling behind in this domain. More than a century ago Leo Tolstoy (who kept correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi and was genuinely interested in Indian philosophy) dreamed about introducing "Bhagavad-Gita" and contemplative prayer to Russian Christians, and now, by virtue of the three Christian Swamis we have got a chance to fulfill his aspirations.

Our first articles on Bede Griffiths and Swami Abhishiktananda appeared in Russian Christian Media in 2005 and aroused some readers' interest. As a result we were invited to participate in a series of radio-programmes on oriental spirituality and Hindu-Christian dialogue, hosted by a Russian Orthodox priest Yakov Krotov. We discussed basic principles of the dialogue, introduced by the Catholic Church at Vatican II and the way they were put in action by the founders of Saccidananda Ashram.

Inculturation and contemplation were the main issues: many people were surprised to discover how the three Fathers' experience could reconcile contradictions between their Christian faith and profound interest in Non-Christian religions. Besides, Fr. Bede's clear explanations on Christian Meditation satisfied their thirst for contemplative dimension of spiritual life. We felt that there was acute need in a more sophisticated resource that would provide information on the

three Fathers and contemplative prayer.

In summer 2006 we (as a small contemplative group of Christians - mostly Catholics from Ukraine and Russia) introduced a web-site called "Sangha of Henri Le Saux, Jules Monchanin and Bede Griffiths" that contained brief biographies of the holy Fathers and extracts from their works. It became possible only with help of brothers and sisters worldwide who supported us, prayed for our work and gave their kind permissions to translate and publish the materials. By the present moment our web-site has more than a dozen sections with texts, photographs, prayers, bhajans, meditation guidelines and reference sources.



Ilya Voronov, Father George and Maxim Demchenko at Shantivanam 2006

or the role of sannyasa in Indian life pattern and in Hindu-Christian dialogue. The first regular Christian Meditation Group starts in July 2007 in the Evangelical-Lutheran Parish of St. Michael, Moscow and, in the long view, the Christian Meditation movement can go on spreading in the Diocese to which the mentioned Parish belongs.

The most exciting event for us was a pilgrimage of two of us to Tamil-Nadu in October-November 2006, when we could experience the real presence of Fr. Bede in his Ashram and visit the most sacred places such as Sri Rangam and Rameshwaram. We have reflected our meditations on the pilgrimage in a series of articles and photographs most of which are available on the web-site. Looking back at the first year of the work of our project we would like to thank all those who helped us and we are looking forward to cooperation with people and societies worldwide, working in the domain of spreading the three holy Fathers' New Vision of Reality and that of restoring contemplative dimension in the life of modern society.

www.shantivanam.info

Maxim would be pleased to hear from any member of the Sangha, in particular to hear of any who might be visiting Russia or who have friends in Russia.

More than a century ago Leo Tolstoy (who kept correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi and was genuinely interested in Indian philosophy) dreamed about introducing "Bhagavad-Gita" and contemplative prayer to Russian Christians, and now, by virtue of the three Christian Swamis, we have got a chance to fulfill his aspirations.

Apart from the web-resource we are working on other projects: publishing of a first Russian book about Henri Le Saux, Jules Monchanin and Bede Griffiths, arranging a first Christian Meditation Group in Moscow, etc. The book called "The Way of Saccidananda" will be published by the end of summer 2007 and, in addition to the three Fathers' biographies and experience, it will also cover such important issues as the history of Christianity in India

Who do people say that Jesus Christ is? *Br Martin - Park Place Summer Retreat.*

The following is extracted from Brother Martin's remarkable paper, upon which he based his two talks at the Summer Retreat at Park Place.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are called monotheistic religions... (but) the author contends that none of the monotheistic religions do justice to the person and message of Jesus Christ. His experience and message cannot be understood from the background of the Biblical tradition alone. The author contends that whatever is said of Jesus Christ can be said of every human being. Jesus Christ is an archetype, which every human being can realize within his or her spiritual life. It is the contention of the author that Jesus Christ experienced the highest divine - human relationship and the highest human - human relationship. He opened this possibility for every human being.

The Spiritual Journey of Jesus

There are four important moments in the life of Jesus. The first important moment was his birth as a human being. His physical mother Mary conceived him, protected him and nourished him for nine months in her womb and gave birth to him as a human being. In this sense he was a hundred percent human being like any other human being.

The second important moment was the day of his circumcision. On the eighth day he was circumcised and was later presented in the temple. The temple is the symbol of Judaism. It is the symbol of the spiritual womb. Judaism was the spiritual womb of Jesus. So Jesus entered into the womb of Judaism and had to grow as a Jew. We can say that Judaism became pregnant with Jesus and nourished him in her spiritual womb... As a Jew he might have said that Judaism was his way, his truth and his life. As he grew in the womb of his religion he realized the limitations of his religion (in a sense every religion). His religion divided humanity into two: Jews and Gentiles. It limited God to being the God of the Jews but not of the Gentiles. It made human beings subservient to religion. Religion was greater than human beings.

This brought him to the third important moment of his life, which was

the moment of his baptism at the River Jordan. The moment of baptism was a moment in which Jesus came out of the womb of religion and entered into the universal presence of God. In this experience he realized that he was neither a Jew nor a Gentile but a universal human being, in whom the whole humanity, the past, the present and the future are present. He realized that God was the God of the whole of humanity and not just the God of the Jews. Now he would say, *'I am the way, the truth and the life'*. The essence of it was that he was greater than religion. The human being is greater than religion.



Brother Martin answering questions.

The fourth important moment in the life of Jesus was when he said, *'I and the Father (God) are one'* (John 10:30). That was the culmination of his spiritual journey. We need to understand what he meant when he said that he and the Father were one... The mind that says *'I and the Father are one'* is not an Individual Mind, not a Collective Mind, not a Universal Mind but a Unitary Mind, which is nothing but the Divine. Only God can make this statement. It amounts to saying that there is only one God and everything comes from that one God and goes back to God. At this level God is the way, the truth and the life.

This journey of Jesus is a journey in which an Individual Mind grows into the Unitary Mind.

Brother Martin then goes on to address some of the most fundamental questions of Christianity:

"Was Jesus born of a Virgin? Is Jesus Christ God? Is he the second person of the Holy Trinity? Is he the Son of God? Is he God becoming

flesh? Is he the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets? Is he the 'only way to God'? Is there anyone outside Christ? Is Jesus Christ only a reformer of Judaism? Did he start a New Religion? Did he bring Peace to the World? Is there a Last Prophet or Last Word of God? Did Jesus save Human Beings? Did he die for the Sake of Humanity? Did he sacrifice himself for the Sins of the People? Did he Rise from the Dead? Is God Trinity? What is the symbolism of the Eucharist? What is the sign of oneness with God? Who do people say that Jesus Christ is and who do people say that a Human Being is?"

"What would have been the answer of Jesus Christ?"

The answer of Jesus would have been: *'I was born as a human being through Mary, and then I entered into Judaism and lived like a Jew. At the moment of my baptism I discovered that I was the Son of God, which means that I was the Universal Mind. This Universal Mind does not belong to time. It is eternal. Later I realized that I was one with God. In this experience I realized that I was not a creature of God but Son of God. I came from God and returned to God. In this experience I realized that every human being has the same possibility. Human beings are not creatures of God but Sons and Daughters of God. They are ultimately one with God. There is only one God. Every human being comes from God and returns to that God, just like a piece of ice comes from the water and returns to the water. I want every human being to realize this truth'.*

It is the contention of the author that the understanding of Jesus by Jews, Muslims and Christians does not do justice to the experience and message of Christ. The core issue is the theory of creation. The Jews, the Muslims and the Christians believe that human beings are created out of nothing. Jesus Christ did not believe in this. The theory of creation out of nothing is not a very liberating theory. It does not give possibility to the highest divine-human relationship that Jesus experienced and opened to humanity.

See next page for how you can order the full text of Brother Martin's paper and the double CD of his talks at Park Place.

Peace after the storm at the Summer Retreat at Park Place in July.

Friday 20th July was the day the floods came to the South of England. Amongst those who were unable to even to reach the Retreat were poor Nick Sadler, who had put in all the work into organising it, and his wife Mary, who were marooned at their home in Worcestershire and others had to abandon their journeys after torrid delays. Those who made it were rewarded by a rich and wonderful occasion, admirably directed by Michael Giddings as this report from Amanda Moss will show.

What a journey. Barely out of first gear on the M25. Discovering later major flooding had caused the delay. The journey was a reflection also of my recent difficult times. On arriving, once again the warmth and welcome into the Sangha lightened the load.

The gift of a sacred space where we sat together in stillness and silence had been beautifully prepared. Meditation and chanting lifting us together in preparation for Brother Martin's reflections on Jesus.

I was inspired and affirmed in what I heard. of Jesus, the radical teacher I have come to know. We shared in small groups the moments



Prabin and Jesty, from the Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts, Southern India, which is part of the Catholic Diocese of Trichy covering Shantivanam, who had been brought to Park Place by Bernard Kilroy. Here they lead Sangha members in Indian folk dance. Later they gave a spellbinding performance of classical Bharathanatyam dance - with a little folk dance and Bollywood thrown in!

in which we had been touched by Brother Martin's offering. This sharing is such a privilege, to be with open and giving friends, humbly offering our inmost thoughts and feelings. Sharing in this way is vulnerable and so opens doors to different perception, that new way of seeing.

The morning chant on the lawn of the Gaytri mantra brought us to life in new light of the day. The creativity in Love of the beautiful young Indian dancers showed us another kind of prayer. The gentle closing of the weekend was a beautiful Eucharist in the chapel of Park

Place offered by the Chaplain and Sisters. It reflected our willing open hearts to receive the banquet that is always being offered to us. To experience our experiences fully and always outstretched to each other. The gift for me was to be present with the Sangha.

Brother Martin Sahajananda's talks at the Park Place Summer Retreat

WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS?

Two CD Set

The two CD set of Brother Martin's talks at Park Place is available for £10 a set and the copy of his paper for £3 including postage. Please send a cheque to me made out to the Bede Griffiths Sangha.

Timothy Glazier, 2 Tynings Road, Nailsworth, Glos GL6 0EJ.

An email document of Brother Martin's paper can be sent on request: tim@timothyglazier.com

The Caldey Silent Retreat 2007

If I ever have to be marooned on an island please let it be Caldey. It has just the right amount of cliffs and beaches, woods and fields. And although not untouched by civilisation, only the civil bit has left its mark. One abbey, one tea shop, one retreat house, one church, one gift shop, one medieval priory, one post office, one chocolate factory. So it is just the right place for a silent retreat and a few days ago twelve Sangha members made the 20 minute journey from Tenby harbour to take advantage of the unique spiritual reservoir that is Caldey Island.

Our retreats are structured along the lines of a day in Shantivanam. Greeting the dawn with the guyatri mantra; meditation followed by readings prayers and bhajans three times a day; namajapa at 21:00, and so to bed. In between times we draw on the resources of the island, and of ourselves, for activities that enhance the retreat experience. Brother David read his poetry, and discussed monastic tradition. Brother Gildas introduced us to Zen painting, and talked to us about the history of Caldey in such a way that several dozen other topics were touched-on



Walking the labyrinth on the beach.

along the way. Sister Dolores talked to us about the hermit choice and shared some of her exquisite poetry with us.

Sangha members Lizzie & John Hopthrow led us through making and walking a labyrinth on the beach one afternoon, and through an evening on Taizé singing and meditation in the candlelit priory church. Aileen Neilan guided us through meditative mandalas on one evening, and through making prayer beads one afternoon.

Undoubtedly the Interfaith highlight of the week was when two of the retreat members, Reverend Lizzie Hopthrow and Father Adrian Smith, con-celebrated mass.

We ended with an evening ceremony on the beach around a fire created by Ryan Hybart. I cannot wait for next year's retreat. Thanks to Johanna Walters for arranging it all.

Martin Neilan

Caldey Called me

*The world was not as it should be
I felt in chains, I should be free.
Something must change, perhaps its me.
...then Caldey called me.*

*I sat in church, stuck in my pew
observing rites that should be true
to treat with God I never knew.
...then Caldey called me.*

*I wanted towers in the sky
I wanted armies up on high
I wanted God, but not to die.
...then Caldey called me.*

*I wanted action, I got calm
I wanted medicine, I got balm
I wanted guidance, I got charm
...when Caldey called me.*

*This isle where barriers are thin
between the world divine and skin
Is where my healing can begin
...as Caldey calls me.*

An offering from the Groups final sharing.

Coming Events and other Activities

Sangha Study Day with Ken Knight

The Fintry Trust Centre, Brook, Surrey.

Saturday 27th October 2007

Contact Ken Knight on hilken_98@yahoo.com

or 01689 861004

See page 4 for more details.

SANGHA ADVENT RETREAT

Fri 7th – Sun 9th December 2007

This year the annual Sangha Advent Retreat will be held at the Ammerdown Centre, Radstock, Nr Bath, Somerset - a beautiful retreat house with excellent facilities, extensive grounds and single, twin and double en-suite rooms.

A time of Watchfulness

Advent is a time of inner preparation summed up by sentences used in the liturgy of Advent Sunday: "Now is the time to wake out of sleep..." (Rom. 13:11) and "Watch at all times..." (Luke 21:36). This theme will run through our time together which will contain times of meditation, chanting, prayer readings study and sharing. During our study periods we will seek guidance from the psychological and spiritual wisdom preserved in the Philokalia of the Eastern Church and we will be introduced to teachings on how to practically engage in the work of inner transformation which opens the heart to a deeper communion with God and with one another.

The cost is £145. To book please complete the booking form with this Newsletter or contact Victoria Glazier on 01453 839488 victoria@timothyglazier.com

Hermits in Company Silent Retreat

2nd-5th May 2008

For the Sangha Spring Retreat we are returning to Michaelgarth Guest House, set in the beautiful grounds of the Tymawr Convent, near Monmouth.

Contact Jane Lichnowski
01285 651381 jane@lichnowski.com

Sangha Summer Seminar

**Park Place Pastoral Centre
18th-20th July 2008.**

Details in Next News Letter.

The Bede Griffiths Charitable Trust.

At the Trust AGM on 30th September the Trustees were delighted to be able to agree the funding of the final phase of capital expenditure at the St Adrian's Reachout Centre in Muttom. This will enable the upstairs building work to begin and the hall, chapel, computer lab and sewing rooms will be so greatly appreciated. Sister Selvi has 22 people coming next week to begin the stitching classes in the corridors! *The Trustees expressed their thanks to everyone who has made this possible. They also heartily thanked Ann Beazer who is resigning as a Trustee and welcomed Greville Norman, from Chigwell, who has agreed to take over as Treasurer.*

With love and thanks Jill

Jill Hemming 01227 752871 bg.trust@btinternet.com

THE EXTENDED MIND

**A talk by Dr Rupert Sheldrake
in Gloucestershire**

Wednesday 24th October 2007

Rupert Sheldrake wrote his first ground breaking book on formative causation with the encouragement of Father Bede at Shantivanam.

The Matara Centre, nr Tetbury Gloucestershire.
Details Timothy Glazier 01453 839488 tim@timothyglazier.com

DIVERSE JOURNEYS with Meath Conlan

Once again Dr Meath Conlan, who is an experienced India Guide, is leading journeys in North and South India - which includes a visit to Shantivanam - in February/March 2008. Describing them as "culturally rich and spiritually satisfying" these journeys "combine cultural and geographical exploration with relaxation, spiritual rest, prayer, meditation and talks." Full information on www.diversejourneys.net

LEARNING TO BE AT HOME with Sister Monica

Described as a retreat with a difference, Sister Monica Butler leads retreats which she calls 'learning to be at home' - a retreat process that enables the conscious and unconscious aspects of the self into Divine integration - drawing on the wisdom of the five great faith traditions and contemporary psychology. *For more details on these five day retreats contact Monica@butler3174fslife.co.uk 020 8552 4729.*

UK VISIT BY SISTER ISHPRIYA

Sister Ishpriya, friend of Father Bede about whom Elizabeth West wrote an article in the Summer Newsletter is visiting the UK in March 2008 giving talks and weekend retreats. For details contact Elizabeth on ewest@ahs.org.uk or to make bookings 0117 9079950 administration@emmaushouse.org

Resources

Three New books by Sangha Members.

Cicely Saunders

**The founder of the Modern Hospice Movement/
by Shirley du Boulay with Marianne Rankin**

The memorial service for Dame Cicely Saunders, who died in 2005, was held in Westminster Abbey and was attended by 1800 people. She was founder of the St Christopher's Hospice and of the Modern Hospice Movement. Her work transformed the management of pain and the care of the dying, and led to the establishment of the field of palliative medicine. This changed the face of medical practice for ever.



Shirley du Boulay's biography made Dame Cicely's life known to a large public in 1984, yet she was to live for another 21 years. In this new edition, Marianne Rankin provides a further three chapters that cover the time until her death. The book also includes four pages of photographs.

'This perceptive biography...will be enjoyed by young and old, by those with and without religion'

The Times Literary Supplement.

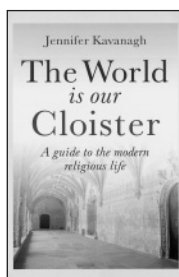
'The book describes the philosophy of modern hospice care better than any other book yet published. A skilfully balanced, perceptive and sensitive picture of a great woman of our time.'

The Lancet.

Published by SPCK £12.99 paperback.

The World is our Cloister by Jennifer Kavanagh

This is a guide to the new religious life, a life lived not behind the walls of a monastery, but in the world. It's about engagement as well as withdrawal, the balance between a life of action and one of contemplation; how to be in the world but not of it. The book starts with my own dilemmas and reflects the experiences of those I have talked to including a Jain, a Sufi, Kabbalists, engaged Buddhists, Hindus, Quakers, Christians, and those who prefer no label.



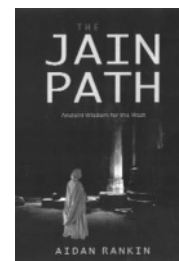
Living a God-filled life without the structures and material security of a monastic community is not an easy option. The World is our Cloister considers how people juggle the demands of family and job on the one hand and their devotional life on the other; what helps them, what disciplines they find for themselves, and in what ways they need to distance themselves from the cultural norms of society. And the findings are optimistic.

Brother Martin writes of this book: *"It shows clearly how people belonging to different spiritual traditions or no tradition at all can make their spiritual journey to the source of our life. In a world where many people are dissatisfied with the traditional religions and looking for a different way, this book will be a good companion."*

Published by O Books at £11.99.

The Jain Path: Ancient Wisdom for the West by Aidan Rankin

Jainism is one of humanity's oldest spiritual pathways. It combines a belief in the centrality of the individual and the individual conscience with awareness of the interconnectedness of all forms of life, which requires that we co-operate with nature as well as our fellow humans. In Jainism, we encounter a 'marriage of East and West', reason and intuition, spiritual and scientific method. Until now little known outside Indian communities, the Jain path has many lessons for those of us in the west who seek a shift of priorities away from economic growth towards quality of life, social justice, compassion for all species and the reintegration of humanity with the rest of nature.



'The Jain Path is the best introduction to Jainism available. It is at once very topical, clear and engaging.' David Frawley, Director, American Institute of Vedic Studies.

Published by O books PbK. £11.99.

New translations in Spanish

The Marriage of East and West and The New Creation in Christ

These two books by Father Bede Griffiths, together with books by Father Laurence Freeman, have been translated into Spanish by Sangha member Magdalena Puebla.

0054 220 4761641 malen_puebla@hotmail.com

New from WCCM

Two CDs to aid your meditation

MEDITATION AND THE NEW CREATION IN CHRIST
Fr Bede Griffiths explores the tradition of Christian meditation and its relationship to the Eastern tradition. He shows how the inner journey can contribute to spiritual unity. Drawn from his talks at the 1991 John Main Seminar. £4.99

THE HUNGER FOR DEPTH AND MEANING Learning to meditate with John Main

John Main recovered the Christian tradition of meditation as practised by the early Desert monks and taught it as a spiritual discipline for people from all walks of life. These short talks include *'How to meditate'*, *'Leaving the ego behind'*, *'Self-transcendence'* and *'The Way of Silence'*. £4.99

SAT-CIT-ANANDA

an inspiring CD of bajans from Shantivanam, sung by Father Amaldas, with an introduction by Father Dominic giving a short history of the ashram. £7.99

Ask for complete list of Father Bede Griffiths's and Father John Main's books, CD's, Videos and DVD's.

All available from MEDIO MEDIA

St Mark's, Myddelton Square, London EC1R 1XX
mail@wccm.org Call Jan Dunsford on 020 7278 2070
Add £1.00 postage in the UK orders; postage on overseas orders will be charged according to weight.

Sangha Contacts

Sangha Contact and Welcome

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

England

Beds: Bedford - Peter Forrest 01234 831361 Bucks:
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: Revd. Chris Collingwood 020 8501 5771
Gloucestershire: Timothy and Victoria Glazier
01453 839488
Hertfordshire Graham Thwaits. 01279 834315
Kent: Canterbury, Jill & Adrian 01227 752871
London N4 - Ann O'Donoghue 0207 359 1929
London SE (Kent) - Hilary Knight 0168 986 1004
London N/Herts - Edgar Holroyd-Doveton
020 8386 4323
Middlesex Pinner. Catherine Widdicombe
jewiddicombe@tiscali.co.uk
Norfolk: Chris Smythe 01493 664725
Northants: Henry Worthy 01604 513032
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: Cuckfield - Gillian Maher 01444 455334
Chichester - Therese O'Neill 01730 814879
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

West Kilbride Mary Laidlaw 01294 822739
marylaidlaw@aol.com

Wales

West Wales: Martin & Aileen Neilan 01834 871433
martin.neilan@btinternet.com
Mid Wales: Montgomery - Jonathan Robinson
01588 620779
Holywell - Philip Francis 01352 711620

Channel Islands Jersey:

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

Overseas contacts

Argentina Magdalena Puebla.
malen_puebla@hotmail.com
00542204761641
Australia Andrew Howie iona@netspace.net.au
East St Kilda - Samantha Semmens
Ssemmens@trinity.unimelb.edu.au
Belgium Wies Beckers taverniersbeckers@yucom.be
Chile 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
Italy Mario la Floresta laflor_l@libero.it
Malta Godwin Genovese shine@vol.net.mt
New Zealand Kevin Moran, Christchurch
s.friend@paradise.net.nz
USA Florida - Michael Spillane
mspillane@legallaidpbc.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

Meditation Groups

Gloucestershire: Nailsworth. Timothy and Victoria Glazier
01453 839488 *Group Mondays 6.30pm*
Hertfordshire Bishop Stortford. Graham Thwaits.
01279 834315 *Group Thursdays 6.30pm*
London SE (Kent) - Hilary Knight 0168 986 1004
Group Wednesdays 7.30.
Barnes. Stefan Reynolds. 07930679905
stefandreynolds@yahoo.co.uk *Every Wed.*
Middlesex Pinner. Catherine Widdicombe
jewiddicombe@tiscali.co.uk
Group Fridays 8.00pm
Northants: Henry Worthy 01604 513032
Group Thurs at 8 p.m.
Oxon: Oxford - Shirley du Boulay 01865 310332
shirley.harriott3@btopenworld.com
Please contact as spaces limited.
Sussex Therese O'Neill 01730 814879 *Group meets*
2nd Wed of each month. Chichester.
Mary Corbyn 01903 882508 *Group meets*
each Tuesday. Arundel.
Yorks: Margaret Cadnam 01226 217042 *Group*
meets 1st Thurs of each month Mirfield.