

SUMMER SCHOOL REPORT 2017

by Beverley Reid

This year, the 66th Buddhist Society Summer School was held from the 26th August to 2nd September 2017 in the Royal Agricultural University Cirencester.

The week began during the Saturday afternoon registration period where many were catching up with old friends and making new ones. A little later, for those who wished to participate, Venerable Sogan gave an optional introductory talk to assist the students with tips on how to watch the breath and sit comfortably in the correct meditative posture.

After the evening meal, the Summer School was officially opened by the Chairman of the Buddhist Society, Dr. Desmond Biddulph.

The attendees quickly settled down into a week long timetable of meditation, teaching, relaxing and personal reflection. Each day began with an hour long mediation followed by breakfast and a second meditation session followed, beginning with a short and insightful discourse from Ven. Sogan. The timetable allowed for 3 lectures a day; morning, late afternoon and early evening. Each day concluded with a 30 minute long meditation which started at 9.30 pm each evening.

The period after lunch and before the 5 pm lecture was special personal free time for everyone to explore the quaint market town of Cirencester, or to simply relax in the stunning Cotswold countryside. The more adventurous took trips to the Westonbirt Arboretum, which was no more than a 45 minute car journey from the University, while some walked to the source of the River Thames.

The first 3 morning lectures Sunday to Tuesday were entitled "The First Turning of the Wheel" which were presented by Dr. Biddulph. The remaining 3 lectures, Wednesday to Friday, were all given by Roy Sutherwood entitled "Mahayana 1, 2, 3". All of the lectures were excellent and provided much food for thought.

The 5pm late afternoon early evening lectures were given by Martin Goodson. These covered the daily life practice and mindfulness; the talks were full of witty stories and helpful examples to aid the student.

Evening talks were given by a variety of speakers covering a wide range of interesting subjects. The first talk was by Mary Stewart who has kindly given talks at previous Summer Schools. The subject for this year was on the Nalanda Mahavihara. This talk

discussed the amount of research undertaken to assess the validity and archeological importance of the site.

A lovely talk followed on Monday evening by Kathy Kilmurry entitled "The Dharma Goes East". It was accompanied by some vibrant slides of Buddhist relics, paintings and shrines.

Roy Sutherwood's insightful and thought provoking evening talk on Tuesday covered the subject of Tibetan Zen.

During the week, we were joined by Ven. Phra Kru Samu Lom and Ajahn Amaro. Ven. Phra Kru Samu Lom provided a witty and animated talk on the 3 signs of being on the Wednesday. On Thursday evening, Ajahn Amaro provided a very clear and to the point teaching on Right Effort; during this talk it was so quite in the room, a pin could have been heard to drop.

For those wished to revisit any of the lectures, recordings of each one was taken during the week to be made available on CD for purchase at a later date from the Buddhist Society.

The year's Summer School could not have taken place without the help and patience of the Summer School secretaries, Linda Marlow and Chris John. They worked behind the scenes with the University to bring everything into place and ensured that the event ran smoothly.

After a 3 year absence it was great to be back amongst friends in great surroundings. Roll on 2018 ... see you there!