

The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

Volume 2 Issue 1

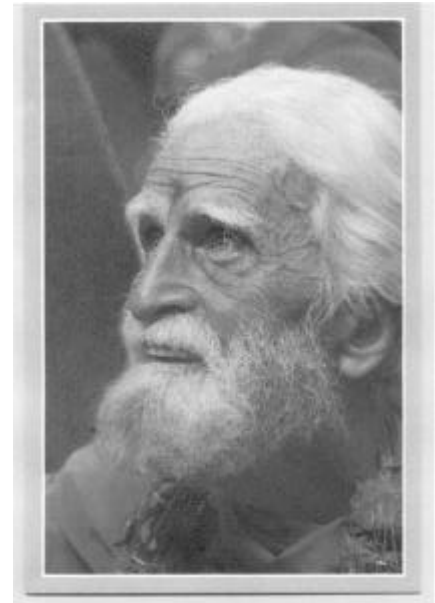
March 1999

Editorial

The other day I was reading a book about Rudolph Steiner and was struck by his description of community as “the waking up through meeting the soul and spirit of a fellow human being”.

It seems to me that the Sangha is such a community and its coming together in retreat, practising mindful living, meditation and common worship, is the sort of community that Father Bede saw as the bedrock of the Church of the future. Father Bede’s view, encouraged by the spirit of openness in the Second Vatican Council, was based on a profound understanding that there is a true revelation of God in all religions, that religions are complementary and that the future of civilisation depends on people being open to the truths revealed through all religions.

In its common prayer or worship the Sangha explores this truth with readings from different scriptural traditions and by displaying sacred images from different traditions in our shrine room. As we can see from this edition of the Newsletter, this provides a challenge to many of us. How to be open to the truth without denying the completeness of



the Christian revelation. How to avoid the charge of syncretism. I am grateful to the members of the Sangha who have contributed their reflections and look forward to more contributions from you all.

Since we last mailed out to you, Jill and I have visited Shantivanam. It was a wonderful experience and such a gift to see the spirit of the Ashram and its founding Fathers still strong and growing. Namaste.

Adrian Rance

Inside this issue:

<i>Meditation – by Father Bede Griffiths</i>	2
<i>A Recent visit to Shantivanam</i>	4
<i>The Prinknash Retreat – two reflections</i>	5
<i>A Letter from America</i>	6
<i>Details of Br Martin’s visit to the UK</i>	7
<i>Books available from the Sangha</i>	7
<i>Future Events with the Sangha</i>	8

Brother Martin’s UK visit July 1999

Once again Brother Martin, our spiritual friend and guide, is visiting Europe from Shantivanam. He will spend June in Germany and Belgium, and July in the UK. He has a packed itinerary which is detailed on Page 7 of this edition. Many will recall the inspired talks Martin gave at last year’s Park Place retreat and will be pleased to know that he has now had published a small book, “A New Vision of Christianity” which

contains many of those insights.

Martin’s new book is available from the Sangha at the cost of £5 including postage. See page 7 for ordering details.

We hope to publish a review of this important book in the next Newsletter. If you would to contribute a review, or some views please write to the editor.

Meditation – a talk by Father Bede

Meditation was central to Father Bede's life; his quiet times were the dawn and dusk pillars of his day. Though his own mediation was firmly based in the Christian tradition, he felt that the Christian churches did not give it enough attention, not did they teach a practical method of prayer. In this area they had, he was convinced, much to learn from the eastern religions.

The following is a talk he gave in 1985 when visiting Perth, Western Australia. We are grateful to Shirley du Boulay for making it available to us.

What people today are seeking above everything else is a practical method of prayer and meditation. That's why thousands and thousands of people come to India every year in search of meditation, a way to God you could say. One of the distressing facts that we find day by day that I would say almost 60% of the people who come to our ashram are Catholics or other Christians who have left the Church. They leave the Church to find God. It's a paradox today. Somehow the way the faith that is presented to them in their schools and parish churches and so on doesn't answer their need. Again and again they tell me 'Until I was 15 or 16 I went to Mass regularly and to confession - I did all the right things, then I gave the whole thing up'. Not for any solid reason, but dissatisfaction. It didn't answer the need of the growing person.

What people today seek is something beyond the reason and the will. I put it like this: the palm of the hand - fingers represent the faculties, the senses, the feelings, the imagination, reason and will, and we are exercising all the faculties day by day in work, and in prayer. But meditation in the Indian sense is as the fingers spring from the palm of the hand, all the faculties spring from the centre of the soul, and meditation is to find your centre, your inner person, and that's what appeals to people today, and appeals to people who have lost their religion or who never had any religion. The word God is very suspect for many people today. And Christ also, there's so much controversy around, so many different views, that people get disillusioned. But everybody wants to find his real self, to find his identity.

The method of meditation is to teach you 'Who Am I?' That is the great Hindu method. As Christians we have to be aware of this. They're not so much interested in talking. Sometimes they do talk, quite a lot, but really they teach by silence. People think 'I am this body' but then you reflect a little on it, and you realise that this is not the real 'I'. You've got your inner person, your psyche, your desires and fears and for most people that is all there is, there is the body and the psyche. For the Hindu, beyond the body and the psyche, is the spirit or the *atman* or the *pneuma* of St Paul. St Paul says the *soma* is body, the *psyche* is soul and the *pneuma* is spirit, and the spirit is the point where you go beyond your body and your mind and thoughts and you're open to the spirit of God - and that is meditation and that is what people come to India for.

There are so many methods, but I would say that almost every valid method is to bring you from your faculties, your thoughts,

your feelings, your desires, your will into your centre to experience the reality within. They call it *Brahman* or *Atman*. It cannot be named. You go beyond words. You encounter the spirit of God. I always quote St Paul - 'the spirit of God bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.' At that point our spirit, which is the fine point of the soul, where the soul comes to a point, a still point. And at that point the Holy Spirit meets our spirit and we encounter God.

I think today people are seeking that encounter, external ritual doesn't mean very much to them. And a great deal of the doctrine doesn't mean very much - of course ritual can mean everything and so can doctrine. But for so many people it doesn't strike them and they want to experience the reality - something which changes you from within. We get wonderful experiences at the ashram. People come and are totally transformed. Once they open themselves to this kind of prayer and meditation. I've seen total transformation and they come right back to the faith, to the mass, to the bible and to a genuine spiritual life. I think there's a world hunger. People come from all 5 continents and at least 50 different countries, all seeking the same thing. It's a wave. It's going all over the world. People seeking this experience of God, self-realisation, God-realisation. Some are simply vaguely seeking, they don't know what, but sometimes they begin to see a direction in their lives. They begin to see there's a guidance in their lives. There's an awakening to the spiritual life, where there's no longer accidents, but you realise everything has meaning. It's universal. First it was the young people, but now it's all ages. Something is awakening all over the world, leading people to this deeper experience of God. That is what people are looking for.

And now you have to teach them a method. There are several centres now where they are teaching. Many of you will know Father Basis Pennington at Spencer Abbey, Massachusetts. Interestingly, they took a course on Transcendental Meditation and developed that into Centering Prayer, as they call it. Another one that's not so well known is Father John Main. He was a Benedictine monk of Ealing. They he began Christian meditation using a mantra - his mantra is *maranatha*. 'Lord, Come' in Aramaic. He built at whole meditative process round the mantra. It's extremely effective. He writes from very deep experience.

In our ashram we practice Christian yogic meditation. To simplify it very much, traditional yoga has three aspects. The first is *asana*, that is sitting. This is a revolution for most Christians, we don't know how to sit. The position of the body. But for a Hindu, or for almost any Oriental, sitting is the main thing. If you can sit properly, you will meditate properly, they say, because the body affects the mind. If your body is in tension your mind will be in tension; if your body is relaxed and

is physically in harmony, it will help the mind be relaxed and in harmony. So first of all they teach a method of sitting. The position should be relaxed and firm - they always emphasize relaxation. One of the best *asanas* is simply to lie on the floor and consciously relax every muscle of the body. That is very effective. Yoga is a wonderful discipline of the body. You never force anything. It's very sustained, quiet, rhythmical movement. The minimum of effort, the maximum effect - gradually, you can relax all the muscles. Yoga exercise can help you get a good position for prayer and meditation. Sitting upright on a chair is perfectly alright; you don't have to sit on the floor.

The next thing is the breathing, the *pranayama*. There are two ways of dealing with breathing. The yogic method is to control the breathing. Most people don't breathe properly - they breathe from the chest and you breathe from the abdomen, the lower lung. You can test it by putting the hand and breathing out and you feel it expanding. The whole lung has to be filled. Physically it's very healthy, but psychologically it opens up the whole rhythm of the body. Many people do five minutes *pranayama* before they meditate - it's part of meditation.

The Buddhist method, which many people do, *Vipassana*, particularly is simply to observe your breathing. You just watch your breathing. It sounds rather foolish, but it has wonderful effects. There's a Burmese who gives *Vipassana* courses and I think it's 60,000 people he has trained, many priests and sisters and brothers have been and found it very helpful. It's very strenuous. You have 10 days, 10 hours meditation a day, and you mustn't smoke or drink or read or write, or do anything else but meditate. But everybody says gradually, it calms the body and stops the mind. For all Orientals it is stopping the mind that is so important. Yoga is the cessation of the movements of the mind. Your mind wanders all over the place and you keep coming back to your breathing until everything gets still and quiet. And everyone says you get a wonderful inner peace, it's a psychological thing really. Very profound in its way. So the second thing is breathing.

Now the third thing, which is the key to the whole, is the mantra, the sacred word. We use the Jesus Prayer, the traditional Christian prayer of the Orthodox Church, which is now spreading everywhere. In its traditional form it is *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner*. Some people find it too long and you can adjust it, but it's really raising the heart and mind to God. Father Amaldas has developed his own mantra, which is *Jesu Abba - Jesu* and you breathe in, *Abba - Father - as you breathe out*. You breathe in everybody and everything and all the pains and troubles then you surrender it all the Father. So you sit, you breathe and you quietly repeat the mantra. Your thoughts begin to wander, then you come back to the mantra; they wander again, and you come back to the mantra, until gradually the stillness comes, the mind becomes still. And when the mind is still the deepest centre emerges. You can't produce it. This is contemplation really. You can't prepare yourself, but you have to get to the point of the spirit, when you are open to God. So you stop your thoughts, and stop your ego. The centre of the psyche is the ego. We organise our whole life from childhood onwards from the ego. You have to do so, but then you have to go beyond it. But most people don't, they stop with the ego. All the conflicts arise from the conflict of egos. Contemplation is to go beyond the ego, to let the ego die, if you like. It

opens up to the Holy Spirit, to God.

I am not fully human, I am not what I'm called to be, except in God, in Christ. It's an illusion that a human being is just a body-soul. The body and the soul are instruments totally under the guidance of the spirit within. It is in meditation and genuine prayer that we come to that inner person, that inner reality, and are open to the transcendent. Many people come to our ashram. Some are agnostic, I think, some even atheist, but they are all looking for a deeper meaning in life, and they discover it when they discover this centre. This has a universal message, how to discover your deep inner reality, the 'I' which is beyond the ego.

So we sit, we breathe, we repeat the mantra, till the mind becomes still and we become aware of the presence of God. I call this practice of the presence of God and the value of it particularly is this; that you can't be praying with words all day, and you can't be thinking specifically about God all day, but you can be aware of the presence of God whatever you're doing. It's not easy in every situation, but it's possible in every situation, so this is a fundamental for Christian life.

As we open ourselves to this inner reality, we open ourselves to God - and this is where I see the difference. A Hindu will enter into that inner centre and he will discover his *atman*, his spirit within. It's a very deep experience. He may call it *Brahman*, where he realises that the spirit in you is one with the spirit which is in the whole universe, that's the great insight of the Upanishads, this spirit in man is one with the spirit in the universe. My 'I' in the deepest depth of my being is one with the Brahman, the reality behind the whole universe, so it's an experience of God in that sense. A Buddhist won't use the name God, or the soul. The Buddha didn't want to talk about God, he thought once you begin to talk you begin to argue and to discuss, and you miss the reality, and you are all involved in talk. And so he said 'Follow the 8-fold noble path, this way of right knowledge and right action and right thought and right livelihood and right meditation and right contemplation and this takes you the whole way. Follow that and you'll know then from within, without talking about it. He simply calls it Nirvana. The later Buddhists call it the void, the *Sunyata*, the emptiness, the beyond.

In Christian meditation we enter that point of the spirit, and we encounter the Holy Spirit, and that is rather different. As St Paul says, 'The love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given us.' The Holy Spirit is poured into the heart and it is the spirit of love, that is rather distinctive. It is not that love is absent from the Hindu or the Buddhist; they vary in their different schools. But the Christian experience is essentially this experience of *agape*, of love in the depths of the heart: not an emotional love or any external form, but the love rising in the inner depths, beyond your ego in the depths of your being. That love and the Holy Spirit come to us through Christ, so as you awake to the presence of the Holy Spirit you wake to the whole mystery of Christ, your membership of the body of Christ, and your relation with others.

Now this is important. Some people think that it is all very selfish to go away and meditate alone or go to an ashram and leave everybody behind, and you're trying to get your own salvation. The fact is, of course, that the more

you discover your own inner depth, the more you open to the depths in others. You begin to relate to others in a new way - instead of on the surface, as we often do, physically, externally, psychologically, may be with friendship or affection. It's all wonderful in its way, but you go beyond that, you relate to the depth of the other person - you awaken to the depth in them. That is the secret, hidden in everybody - that if you have opened it in yourself, you can help others to discover it for themselves. So you awaken to the presence of the Holy Spirit and you awake to the whole mystery of Christ, and your relationship with others, and your membership of the body of Christ, and I like to think also that the body of Christ extends to all humanity.

Love is relationship; you cannot have love in a pure identity. It leads us into the depth of the Godhead and to that communion of love. And that's the last thing I want to point out. As we go into meditation in the spirit through Christ to the Father, the more you become open to humanity as a whole. Authentic meditation and contemplation does not separate you. And Jesus himself is the model. He is totally open to the Father, totally surrendered. The Son does nothing but what he sees the Father doing, but at the same time he is totally open to humanity, he gave his life for the world. And that is the model, the total openness to the beyond, total giving, so this kind of contemplation can lead you to your deepest centre into daily life and into what you have to do. And the Church should have that message to help anybody, an atheist, agnostic, to help open himself, to discover his true being. And once you have got to that depth, you can't avoid God, you are just exposed to the reality of God.

A recent visit to Shantivanam Beata Reynolds

Shantivanam had featured in my imagination for many years - since I noticed the impact it and Father Bede had on my son during his gap year in India. As I became aware of his far away corner of the world having become his spiritual home my interest was awakened. Being a 'man of few words' and not one for taking holiday snapshots I had no real perception of what awaited me, when I finally was able to go and find out for myself.

My two weeks stay was a remarkable experience and a valuable journey of discovery.

From the moment I arrived I seemed to be peeling away layers of confines of western civilisation, so in a way it was a backward journey to my fundamental origins and state of being.

I was surprised at my not only being able to live in a very basic and simple way, but actively enjoying it. What I seemed to be intuitively practicing was an acceptance that led to detachment and on to contentment, a going with, rather than against the situation.

In this way I 'conquered' the hard bed with minimal mattress, the non-flush loo, the cold shower with a pitcher, the sitting on the floor at all times. I walked bare-footed, feeling the warm, sandy ground with such pleasure. I learned to enjoy eating with my hand and feeding the leftovers directly to the cow's mouth after the meal! I even mastered my ambivalence about the creepy-crawlies that shared my little cell, trying hard to see them as equals.

Living in this utmost simplicity appealed enormously to me, and I found it tremendously soothing and healing to be so much in touch with myself, and my surroundings.

The second important contributor to my increased feeling of calm and tranquillity lay in the rhythm of the day. It was laid out in a gentle pattern: the wonderful services in the temple, the silence mealtimes, the communal washing up afterwards, the periods of meditation, the times for resting, reading (making use of the exceptional library), walking or yoga practice, the inspiring talks by Brother Martin and the socialising over cups of chai. This repeated framework of the day gave such security, comfort and stability to the mind. Because of it, one lived fully in the moment. It felt like being carried on the waves of a river that knows its flow without you being responsible for it.

But the third and the most important aspect of a stay at Shantivanam is the spiritual atmosphere. It gently draws you inwards, to look for the self. I felt the presence of Father Bede very strongly. I searched it out in moments of difficulties and anxiety (which was also part of the process in this place). Visits to his hut and grave gave me the strength at those times and, although I never knew him, I felt his love and care around me and I was able to surrender my fears and insecurities. I was able to just let myself be.

There were many moments of pure nourishment for the soul, but the evening service was my favourite time. Sitting in meditation while dusk creeps slowly through the open windows of the temple, there is a tangible peace and sweetness in the air; the space filling quietly with the community and the guests to join together in the most graceful service. Sanskrit and Tamil devotional bhajans, with psalms and then readings from the bible and the classical Hindu scriptures, culminating in the beautiful 'arati', the offering of light in the dark heart of the temple, which is then taken out and shared. This was truly a time for psychological and spiritual healing.

Thinking back to it now, makes me long for that
(continued on p 6)

The Prinknash retreat – two reflections.

The Sangha held its annual Advent retreat at Prinknash last December. The Sangha has developed a style of worship and liturgy which includes the placing of images from other religious traditions on our shrine, readings from the bible and from the scriptures of other traditions, and the singing of Christian bhajans in Sanskrit as well as in English and Latin. On this page we publish two views about the retreat which highlight the question of symbols and their use in the life of the Sangha

Pauline Ryan writes:

It was my first experience of a Bede Griffiths retreat. I had never visited India nor Shantivanam, but had heard much about the Ashram from friends who had visited.

I was firmly committed to Fr Bede's views from reading his many books since I first started meditating some twenty years ago. He had been an invaluable bridge between western Christianity that I was experiencing and the developing consciousness from the regular practice of Transcendental Meditation. I only discovered the John Main meditation group some six years ago. His writings were my anchor when I was ploughing a lonely furrow without recourse to spiritual direction.

St Peter's Grange was magical, as was the surrounding countryside covered in hoarfrost. Holly and Ivy, Sanskrit changing, hot mulled wine and mince pies, circle dancing, group meditations, videos of Fr Bede, discussion groups, the ecumenically celebrated Eucharist, the shrine, the silence, the daily routine.

The warmth of the welcome, the friendship shown as warm as the heat emanating from the large pot-bellied wood burning stove, good homespun cooking. Food and warmth for body soul and spirit. These are some of the memories I took away to help me on the difficult journey I had embarked on since the death of our beloved son on Christmas Day 1997.

I had been to many retreats during the year to find healing and strength to help me deal with the pain of a

sudden tragic bereavement. My mother had also

died in the summer, not unexpectedly, but nonetheless a painful experience.

With this background I came Prinknash now knowing quite what to expect, and left with many unanswered questions and reactions that I had not expected.

The shrine disturbed me. Was it a Christian shrine? What was the role of the Eastern religious artefacts, what was their meaning? Should the two be mixed? Would it affect the integrity of each? Can they be mixed without affecting the integrity of each? (At Park Place where we stayed over the Christmas period, Christian religious artefacts only were around, some showing a strong Indian influence - but predominantly, if not exclusively Christian.

Many questions to be answered, much to be shared. Maybe Brother Martin on his next visit could help us disentangle some of these thorny issues. The head and the heart need to work together to reach some consensus.

The whole experience of the Bede Griffiths Retreat for me highlighting the gulf between reading about something and experiencing it personally. I did not expect or anticipate reacting in the way that I have.

The conclusion I have come to at present is to be sure in my own mind of what I'm doing, and bear in mind the requirements demanded of my conversion to Catholicism; but also to acknowledge the role of individual conscience and experience and to find a good spiritual adviser.

Rev Paul Wilton writes:

I had heard about Dom Bede from time to time since the early 1960's, so I thought I might risk stretching my horizons by going on the retreat. As I was under the impression that his Ashram in India was Christian, I was uncomfortable with the eclectic nature of the retreat and the discussions I attended.

The altar in the shrine room was an example of this eclectic nature. As I understand it, the top shelf of the altar was for the gods, and the bottom for the gurus.

On the first day a Hindu God and goddess occupied

the central position on the top shelf, with a cross off to one side. A picture of Jesus, the Son of God, was on the bottom shelf with Dom Bede. Later, the cross was moved to the central position and the Hindu god and goddess were moved to the side. The picture of Jesus joined them on the top shelf. This arrangement might have appeared to make the altar more acceptable to Christians, but it assumed that all Gods are equal or but different manifestations of the same concept.

On Sunday a picture of the Virgin Mary was added to top

(Continued on page 6)

A Letter from America.

The following letter was sent to us by Daniel Pittman of Goddard, Kansas, USA.

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Sangha,

Namaste! I came across information regarding the Sangha in issues of the Golden String and have to confess to being much impressed by what has been recounted relative to the fundamental focus and direction of the Sangha. It seems to me that in your intention and desire you are touching an essential element relevant to beloved Bede. What Bede conveyed is not easily transmitted through words and concepts however beautiful, but much more through a shared sense of Presence and sacred space. Even Bede's own words sang as they did because they arose from such a clear and radiant space. Beyond his words his presence conveyed an immediacy of the Divine that penetrated deeply and continued to caress and move long after one was physically distant from him. That can shine through words but only when the words are appreciated as windows to that presence. At times I fear that in the many words that are being spoken of Bede and of his "theology" some of that is being obstructed.

The Bede that I was blessed to live with for some months in 1985 drew to himself as to a magnet seekers of God from all walks and traditions. He was present to them all and welcomed them all into his company in a way that so often healed and liberated and empowered. So many were neither theologians, academicians nor professional monastics or religious. They were simply "ordinary" seekers. It was these that seemed to have a special love for him and an understanding that at times was lost to the more 'learned'.

It is probably all too obvious that I have some frustrations relative to the preponderance of academic appreciations of Bede that abound or to what seems to be a scale tipped more to the side of clergy than laity. Perhaps that is to be expected. And I know of a number among clergy and monastics who were deeply touched by Bede. But I am so pleased and believe Bede would be to see a Sangha focusing more on prayerful experience and community in an attempt to live his vision and share it with others. Bede felt that so much of the future of the Church rested with the "laity" and seemed to identify with them in significant ways. So as one deeply touched by Bede and his vision and spirit I must say thank you for being a sign of hope and of the vitality of the seeds he planted with and in us.

(continued from P 4)

incredible feeling of peace and makes me homesick for Shantivanam. It was hard to leave such a place of comfort for the heart, but I was determined to carry it with me to help me attain inner harmony wherever I would find myself – to create a Shantivanam within myself.

"From him comes stability, purity, order and truth." I am grateful for this restoring and enriching experience.

Beata visited Shantivanam during January 1999

(Continued from page 5)

shelf. That struck me as out of place because she is neither a goddess, nor is she part of the God Head, the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On the other hand, she does not 'belong' on the bottom shelf any more than Jesus 'belongs' on top.

From my Christian point of view, the blending of religions and religious symbols is not a helpful interfaith way forward. Archbishop George Carey prefers to ask people of other faiths, 'how far down the road can we go together, each of us remaining true to our own faith?' That way we can explore areas of spirituality and work for social justice together without diluting or compromising our own doctrines or understanding.

Hindus may be quite happy to have Jesus on their altars along with their gods. This is not possible in my understanding of Christian theology, in which God the Father created the Universe through God the Son and will judge the Universe through God the Son. It is my belief and hope that through Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the whole Universe will finally be presented complete and perfect to God the Father.

I was surprised to hear the phrase: 'the God beyond God'. In my perspective, there is no god beyond the Holy Trinity.

I was glad to have gone on the retreat. While I cannot say I enjoyed it, it was the best way for me to come face to face with these issues.

A New Vision of Christianity

A new book by Brother Martin

Also tapes of BBC World Service programme on the Sangha.

Books & tapes are available for £5 (inc p & p) each from:

Kim Nataraja, Flat 3, 24 Linden Gardens, London W2 4ES

Cheques payable to The Bede Griffiths Sangha

Brother Martins visit to the Sangha in July

Here are the highlights of Brother Martin's visit. The arrangements are in some cases provisional so please ring the listed number, or Adrian or Jill on 01227 457570 to check what is happening nearer the time.

Northern Ireland.

June 25th – 28th: Details from Sheila Mary O'Donoghue on 01232 287 471

London

June 28th – July 2nd: Talk for the Christian Meditation Community, *Developing the Spirituality of Fr Bede* at 23 Kensington Square, on 1st July, 6 – 8 p.m.. Details from Sheila Velavi on 0181 441 0680. Contact Kim Nataraja on 0171 727 6779 for details of other events.

Park Place, Hampshire

July 2nd – 4th: Bede Griffiths Sangha Seminar, Park Place, Hampshire. See enclosed flyer and booking form.

Canterbury & Kent

July 6th: 7.30 p.m. talk at Friends Meeting House, Canterbury

July 7th: Day retreat at Minster Abbey, Kent. For details call Adrian Rance & Jill Hemmings on 01227 457570.

Oxford

July 8th – 10th: Alistair Hardy Society meeting, Oxford, July 10th. Details from John Osborn on 01235 528701. See separate ad for details.

Monmouth

July 11th: Talk at 10.00 Eucharist St Mary's Church, & at 2.30 p.m. a 'Celebration for St Benedict's Day', with Br Martin & Esther de Waal. Details from Hazel Eyles on 01600 713853

South Wales

July 12th – 15th: Details from Joan Walters on 01646 692496

Glastonbury

July 15th – 17th. Details from Lisahana Webster on 01458 830230.

East Grinstead, West Sussex

July 17th – 18th. Visit to the annual conference of the Christian Community at Forest Row Centre. Details from Angelika Monteux on 01244 867251

Scotland

July 20th – 23rd: visit to Laurieston and Edinburgh. Details from Michael Giddings on 01644 450689.

July 24th – 30th: Visit to Aberdeen and Iona. Details



Brother Martin

Alistair Hardy Society & The Religious Experience Research Centre

Day of Reflection on Religious Experience and Spiritual Growth

Saturday 10th July 1999: 10 – 5

The Theatre Westminster College, Oxford

Including a talk by Brother Martin

For details Phone 01865 243006

Bede Griffiths & the Christian Ashram Movement in India

A day conference at the St Theosevia Centre for Christian Spirituality, 2 Canterbury Road, Oxford

Saturday May 8th 1999 10.30 – 4.00

Speakers include

Shirley du Boulay & Fr Michael Barnes SJ

contact Ann Shukman on 01865 310341

Bede Griffiths

A day with his biographer, Shirley du Boulay

All Saints Church, Battersea, London

Sunday June 6th 1999

The programme begins at 2.00. You may wish to arrive for lunch at 1.00 p.m.

Details from *Christians Aware*, 124 New Walk, Leicester

LE1 7JA. Tel: 0116 254 0770

For further information about the Sangha and its activities

CONTACT

Adrian Rance and Jill Hemmings
15 St Martins Road
Canterbury
Kent
CT1 1QW

Phone +44 (0) 1227 457570
Email arance@msn.com

Future Sangha Retreats

Spring Retreat – The Rowan Tree Centre, Builth Wells April 30th – 3rd May FULLY BOOKED.

Weekend with Brother Martin. Park Place Pastoral Centre, Fareham, Hants. July 2nd – 4th. The theme will be “Non-Duality and Hindu-Christian Dialogue. See enclosed flyer for details and booking form.

Annual ‘Forest’ Retreat, at the Rowan Tree Centre, Builth Wells, Wales. September 12th – 18th 1999. This is a largely silent retreat based on the rhythm of the day at Shantivanam, where we come together as a Sangha for a week of mindful living, meditation and worship in the beautiful Wye Valley. **Contact Jill Hemmings on 01227 457570 for details and booking as soon as possible. Places are limited to 14 people.**

1999 Advent Retreat. Prinknash Abbey, 10th – 12th December
Our annual Bede Griffiths retreat in the monastery where he started his monastic life. Booking forms will be mailed with a later Newsletter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many of you generously made subscription/donations to the Sangha to meet costs such as the Newsletter, subsidised places on retreats, and Brother Martin’s air fare. We have also provided a subscription to the weekly The Tablet for Shantivanam and would like to support community projects run by the ashram.

Could you pay a subscription for 1999. We enclose a subscription form for you to use. Can we suggest £10 for people who are earning or £5 if you are unwaged.

again in print and we understand that it will be coming out in paperback back later this year.

Medio Media, the publishing arm of the World Community for Christian Meditation, carry a range of Fr Bede Books and tapes as well as books by Abishiktananda, Fr Bede’s predecessor at Shantivanam. Medio Media can be contacted on 0171 937 4679

If you have access to the Internet, you can get quite a range of Father Bede’s books on www.Amazon.com. Amazon sell a number of American imprints which are often substantially cheaper than the UK editions.

News from Australia

We have been sent details of Montserrat Ashram which is seeking to offer the people of Victoria and Melbourne, Australia, the opportunity to be inspired and renewed by Fr Bede’s spirit. He visited the Ashram twelve months to the day before he died.

The Ashram is led by Fr Roger McGinley and offers a Christian response to the widespread interest in meditation and the search for a spiritual meaning in life. Fr Roger writes, “We create a pool of silence and a haven of peace and joy and hope in response to the need for justice and compassion. Montserrat follows the way of Bede, bridging eastern and western spirituality. It incorporates and interest and participation in Aboriginal spirituality.”

Books by Fr Bede

Members of the Sangha have expressed dismay over the lack of availability of Father Bede’s books in the shops.

Shirley du Boulay’s biography, Beyond the Darkness is

And finally: CONGRATULATIONS

A new member of the Sangha...

We have had news from Jane Cary, one of the original Sangha ‘core group’ who gave birth to Rufus Bede Stuart on 11th January. She writes, ‘Rufus’ second name is after Bede Griffiths, so I am very much in touch in spirit, if not in person. Had a very long labour during which I thought about Shantivanam a great deal.’