

The BSV Story 1953-1998

Recollections of the Buddhist Society of Victoria

1953 - 1998

by Elizabeth Bell

Why write a history of the Buddhist Society of Victoria? No one in the B.S.V. suggested the idea to me. It was Phra Khantipalo who did that a few years ago, pointing out that a look at the early days of the B.S.V. might show some of the changing perspectives in the growth of Buddhism in Australia. At first I thought: 'No, no,' and it was after much reflection that eventually I put pen to paper - or should I say biro to paper. (I cannot think on a typewriter, much less on a computer!) My first attempt seemed to consist of a list of events and dates - rather dull and lifeless. The second was, perhaps, too lively, too anecdotal, moving into areas outside the B.S.V. This is the third attempt.

The recollections were helped by news items in Metta, B.S.V. newsletters and my diaries. (I have kept a journal for fifty years.)

This history is a tribute to the many teachers who have come to the Buddhist Society and shared with us their experiences, their knowledge, their wisdom. And it is a tribute to the many lay people who have cleaned, cooked and gardened, who have typed, printed and posted, who have given free legal advice when it was needed, who gave talks and organized study groups, who gave generously of their time energy and money.

The Buddhist scene in Melbourne in the early days was very different from what it is now. Indeed there was no Buddhist scene, only a few people trying to understand the Teachings of the Buddha, to implement them in their lives and to provide suitable conditions for the presentation of those teachings. Today there are many Buddhist groups in Melbourne. There are thousands of Buddhists in Australia.

The Buddhist Society of Victoria was founded in 1953. I did not discover its existence until 1963 and if I had discovered it before then the circumstances of my life at that time would have made it difficult for me to take any active interest.

Over the years in my extensive reading I had come across books on Buddhism. I felt utterly at home with what I read and was influenced in many ways.

In January 1963 I found out - through a notice in a newspaper - that a Buddhist monk from Burma, the Venerable U Thittila would be giving a talk in the Nurses' Memorial Hall in St. Kilda Rd on February 1st. I did not know at that time that the Venerable U Thittila had given many talks in Western countries and had lived in England for years - the years of World War 2. This was a wonderful opportunity to hear living Buddhism. I was not disappointed. U Thittila spoke on Happiness - true happiness which does not depend on external conditions. It was not only what he said. It was his demeanor, his air of certainty, his calmness. It was all there. The fragments that I had found on the printed page took shape and became a reality.

I looked at the people in the hall which was full. So there were others in Melbourne who were interested in Buddhism. I resolved to look out for them and eventually found a notice in a daily newspaper. The Buddhist Society of Victoria held meetings in the Crofts in Richmond. I wrote to the P.O. Box number asking for further details. It was a long time till I received a reply. I continued to read books. In October I borrowed from the Public Library 'Journey into Burmese Silence' by Marie Byles, a remarkable book by a remarkable woman, an account of the author's stay in meditation centres in Burma. It made a great impression on me and in one of those beautiful coincidences that do take place, at the same time I received a reply from the B.S.V. apologising for the delay. The writer explained that there had been a change in the meeting place and that the B.S.V. now met in the Henry George League Rooms in George Parade in the city on Thursday evenings.

I went there on October 24th. There were only a few people and the atmosphere was very quiet. Indeed it seemed to be rather cool and reserved but I discovered that this was because some of the more ebullient members were not there that night. I went to the meetings as often as I could. It was not easy. I worked full time and I had family responsibilities. We lived in Eltham. There was an infrequent train service and we lived a long way from the station. Gradually I go to know some of the members - Len Bullen, Les Oates, Len Henderson (three of the Foundation members), Ernest Dadswell who was friendly and hospitable, dispensing drinks of blackcurrant juice, and Fred Whittle, another early member. Fred was a dedicated vegan. He had been a monk in Burma but had had to disrobe because of illness.

In informal talks with Len Bullen I became aware of some of the early history of the B.S.V. It was called the Buddhist Society of Victoria because at that time it was the only Buddhist Society here. Len Bullen ran an information centre but it was just that - a centre for sending out information on Buddhism. He had tried to form a society years ago but the attempt had failed. It was in 1953 that various interested people got together to form the B.S.V.

Members of the bhikkhu Sangha had come to Australia in those years. The venerable Narada in 1955 and 1958, U Thittile in 1954, 56 and 63. An American nun, Sister Dhammadinna 1952 to 53 and 1957. A block of land was donated to the Society and there was a dedication ceremony by the Venerable Narada but interest dwindled and the title deeds were returned to the donor.

The B.S.V. had a small library, which was kept in a cupboard at the end of the meeting room. It was difficult to display the books, newsletters and booklets from the Buddhist Publication Society of Sri Lanka. Among the journals were copies of an Australian publication called Metta, printed and published in Sydney and I read present and early copies with interest. It had been the publication of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales but became the journal of the Buddhist Federation of Australia when Victoria and New South Wales joined forces to form the Federation. It contained articles by Charles Knight, Natasha Jackson, Les Oates and others, book reviews and news notes.

There was much to interest me in the pages of Metta. For example, in the March 1963 issue there was an account of a meditation retreat held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Berkeley (two pioneers of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W.) under the guidance of the Venerable U Thittila, with sessions starting at 4.30 a.m. and finishing at midnight. It must have surely been the first meditation retreat held in Australia.

In the May 1959 issue there was a history of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W., a history of the Victorian Society and a copy of the Constitution of the Federation. Here is the history of the B.S.V. up to 1959:

Before the Society was founded, those of us in Victoria who were interested in Buddhism were, on the whole, isolated students with little contact -except by way of correspondence - with others of similar interests.

One such lone student was Leonard Bullen, who first became interested in Buddhism in about 1932 by reading fragments of the teachings in books. During the following few years, he corresponded with the Buddhist Lodge, London, and endeavoured to interest other Melbourne people but without any great success.

For a short period - this was somewhere around the year 1938- he gave a series of lectures in Melbourne on various aspects of Buddhism, and followed them with regular discussion-meetings in a small society called the Buddhist Study Group.

The interest was not sufficient, however, to hold this group together in the face of the unsettled conditions of the time. After a few months the meetings ceased.

After the Second World War, one or two attempts were made to form a Buddhist Society in Melbourne. One of these attempts was made shortly after the lectures which Dhammadina, the American Buddhist Nun, gave at the Theosophical Society; but like the others it was without success.

Rev. Dhammadina, after leaving Melbourne went on to Sydney where, under the stimulus of her visit, the Buddhist Society of New South Wales was formed. This was late in 1952. Leonard Bullen kept in touch with the New South Wales Society, and received from it a list of eleven people in various parts of Victoria who were interested in Buddhism. By writing to these people, he arranged a meeting for the 18th April 1953. This meeting was attended by four people, including himself, who formed themselves into the Buddhist Society in Victoria.

There was no immediate growth of the Society, however; in fact, little evident progress was made, for, of the four foundation members two were prevented by domestic circumstances from attending meetings, so that the remaining two - Leonard Bullen as President and Sydney Hill as Secretary - were the only active members. For some months, this embryonic Society's activities consisted mainly of arranging small newspaper insertions to advertise the Society's existence, and for a time there seemed little prospect of development.

However the advertisements brought about the appearance of Leslie Oates; and with the encouragement given by his interest it was decided to hold the first public meeting.

This meeting was arranged for the 17th October 1953, at one of the small meeting rooms in the Savoy Building in Russell Street. It was a definite success with an attendance of about seventeen and it was followed by a series of public meetings at the same building on alternate Tuesday evenings.

On the intervening Tuesday evenings there were small meetings at a city cafe, these being regarded partly as a committee meetings and partly as advanced discussion meetings. Actually there was as yet no formal committee.

In the latter part of April, 1954, the visit of U Thittila and the lectures he gave under the auspices of the Society were given a great deal of publicity by the daily papers, and gave new impetus to the society.

Shortly after this visit - that is, at a meeting on the 28th June, 1954- we introduced into the Society what was in effect, the rudiments of a constitution, and elected Harry Dean as the President, For some months following, the public meetings were held on two Tuesday evening each month at the Savoy Building, and on the intervening Tuesdays there were Dhamma meetings at Harry Dean's home at Springvale.

Later in the same year Harry Dean left Melbourne to take up work in the East and on the 23rd September Leslie Oates was elected President.

An important step forward was made when on the 17th December 1954, we transferred our meeting place to the Henry George Clubroom, George Parade, Melbourne. This move gave us a sense of stability, for whereas our previous meeting place at the Savoy was noisy and unsuitable for our purposes, the new meeting place was quiet, so that we were able to introduce a short meditation period into some of the meetings.

The visit of Narada Thera in March 1955 - our second visit from a bhikku- took place two years after the founding of the Society. As in the case of U Thittila's stay in Melbourne a year before, the Society benefited, not only by the publicity given to the visit, but also by an increased understanding of the Buddha Dhamma.

At about this time, an anonymous member presented a block of land in Templestowe as a proposed site for a vihara, and Narada Thera dedicated the land for this purpose during his visit.

The meeting of 5th May 1955, was a very important one, for the Society's internal organisation was consolidated, and a formal constitution adopted. Max Dun was elected as President. During the following period, we were frequent and grateful visitors to Full Moon Meetings at Canterbury as the guests of our patron, Major Aye Ngwe (the Burmese Military Attaché) and his wife.

Late in July of the same year, a small group of friends of Buddhism formed the Buddhist Information Centre, with the main object of conducting a correspondence course on Buddhism; but lack of finance restricted its activities.

In October 1955 Frederick Whittle left for Burma to become a bhikku there, and at the same time Sydney Hill went to Cambodia, where he took the robe for a time.

Our society was just about three years old when we received our third visit from a Bhikku, this time the American, Phra Sumangalo, formerly the Ven. Robert Stuart Clifton. His public lectures attracted a great deal of attention, while his more intimate talks with our members gave us much personal help. It was Phra Sumangalo who brought together some of the Burmese, Singhalese and Thai people living in Melbourne and instigated the formation of the young Buddhist Association of Victoria.

This group held meetings, generally of a social nature, since one of its main functions was to bring together Asian and Australian Buddhists.

On 27th May 1956, Leonard Henderson became the new President and shortly afterwards - in June - we had a short visit, with some public lectures, from U Thittila.

Later in the same year, in October, we farewelled our good friend Major Aye Ngwe, and welcomed his successor as the Burmese Military Attaché, Captain Tin Thane Lu.

By this time, Frederick Whittle had returned from Burma, and at the meeting of 12th May 1957, we elected him as the President of the Buddhist Society of Victoria.

Shortly afterwards our friends of the Young Buddhist Association commenced monthly semi- social meetings, some of them being held at the Ceylon Cafe, Prahran. The efforts of some of the Y.B.A. and the Buddhist Society members to establish a Buddhist House in Melbourne at this period had to be deferred because of lack of sufficient funds.

In January 1958 a visit from Charles Knight, Chairman of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales, helped to bring us into closer touch with our colleagues in Sydney.

April of the same year brought us our second visit from our friend Narada Thera, and the public meetings which he addressed, as well as our private discussions with him, helped us as before, to further our understanding, and to consolidate the work of the Society.

Later in the year, Fred Whittle, whilst in Sydney, discussed with the N.S.W. Society the possibilities of an Australian Federation. Returning to Melbourne in August he placed before the committee the main points discussed.

This brings up to the current period, which so far, seems to be one of vitality and progress. Our newsletter has been circulating for about five years, and it appears that it will shortly be absorbed into the N.S.W. Society's paper, Metta, when the proposed Federation is effected.

In early March 1959, a meeting of delegates of the Victorian and N.S.W. Societies was held in Melbourne, and a Pro-Tem Committee formed to inaugurate the Buddhist Federation of Australia. Temporary officials elected were C. Knight, chairman; L. Oates, Secretary; F. Whittle, Treasurer; Mrs. N. Jackson, editor; and L. Bullen, as the fifth committee member.

We can now look back on our six years of existence as the Buddhist Society of Victoria and see in perspective our highlights and lean times; in consequence we can feel confident that Buddhism in Victoria has come to stay.

I continued to read books - The Lion's Roar, translations from the Pali Canon by David Maurice, another pioneer of Buddhism in Australia. An Experiment in Mindfulness by Admiral Shattock, an account of the author's experiences in Burma. And The Heart of Buddhist Meditation by the Venerable Nyanaponika - this book became a source of inspiration to me. I have read and reread it.

Joining the B.S.V. was a most salutary experience for me. If I had remained a solitary person, just reading books, I would have built up in my mind a sanitized picture of Buddhism, with visions of Buddhists as almost enlightened beings. Meeting Buddhism in the flesh (metaphorically speaking) with its fair share of human imperfections and with the constant reminders of my own imperfections kept my feet firmly on the ground.

In February 1964 I was asked to go on the committee. So was another newcomer to the Society - Vittoria Kenway. We were the 'newies'. We had no experience of the committee world. At the annual general meeting in May I was elected Secretary. I remained on the Committee for 30 years, in various capacities -secretary, treasurer, librarian, vice-president, president - the last for 20 years.

There were differences within the committee in these far of years as to what was the best way of presenting Buddhism. Some thought that there should be more talks - but we had to depend on the small number of available speakers. Others thought that there should more evenings of a devotional nature. Len Bullen thought that we should steer clear of the traditions and ceremonies that had become a part of Buddhism in Eastern counties and concentrate on its psychology. And to some, an emphasis on meditation would have been welcome. Advertising the activities of the Society was restricted because of lack of funds but there were display notices at Camberwell and South Yarra stations. A small newsletter was produced from time to time.

In May I attended a celebration of Vesak, the traditional celebration of the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. It was a simple ceremony -a small shrine, flowers, incense, a small Buddha rupa and a few members of the B.S.V. in the home of Rex and Vittoria Kenway but it meant a lot to me and the others who were there.

B.S.V. meetings continued and the committee meetings continued. There was animated discussion on ways and means of building up the Society but attendances remained small - at times very small. Some members felt this more than others. They felt that 'out there' there were many who were interested, who would benefit from the teachings of the Buddha but somehow the necessary contact did not take place.

On March 4th 1965 an American psychiatrist Dr. Douglas Burns visited the B.S.V. and gave a talk. He had been with the C.S.I.R.O. in Tasmania and was on his way overseas. From Thailand he sent us some of his writings - Buddhism, Science and Atheism and The Epistemology of Buddhism. The latter was published in the May issue of Metta.

In June two young Sri Lankans came to our discussion evening- Dayal Abeyasakera and Tudor Sirisena. Dayal became an active member. He was president for two years - 1966 and 1967 - and continued to support the Society until he moved to Queensland.

In October a well-known and highly respected bhikku, the Venerable Piyadassi, came to Melbourne. His visit attracted a lot of interest.

He was interviewed by the press and on radio and his talks were well attended. He stayed in the Kenways' home in South Yarra, walked in the Botanic Gardens and talked in a friendly way with local school children who also walked in that area.

1966 and 1967 were quiet years for the B.S.V. - quiet but uneasy. Membership was low, attendances fluctuated but for the most part were very low. There was much discussion on ways and means of drawing in more people. It was not happening.

Charles Knight came to Melbourne in December and talked to the B.S.V. members of his experiences overseas. I was unable to attend as I had an upset stomach. I could not face up to the long journey to and from the city. Indeed my daughter and I were both of us finding the long journey difficult - I to work and she to the university. We lived on a hill top in Eltham where the bushlike environment and the feeling of community life style meant a lot to us but it seemed the time had come to move on. We had to find another home. Eventually I found a house in Carlton, a pleasant old inner suburb, and I bought it, with the help of a large mortgage.

By that time the morale of the B.S.V. had fallen very low. Financially it was 'in the red' - money was owed for rent and other expenses. Membership and attendances continued to dwindle. In January 1968 I asked the Committee if the B.S.V. would like to make use of my new home and the offer was accepted. Two large rooms in the front of the house divided only by a sliding door could be used as a meeting room and could accommodate a reasonably large number of people. It would be possible to set out the library. There was access to a telephone. Indeed we applied to have the Buddhist Society of Victoria listed under my number and to have it listed in the 'pink' classified pages and this was granted. On March 7th the first public meeting of the B.S.V. took place at 65 Wilson St. Carlton. It was a pleasant evening. There were two newcomers present which I hoped was good sign.

So a new chapter opened in the annals of the B.S.V. Having the meetings in a friendly, congenial atmosphere certainly made a difference. It was possible to sit and relax - people could linger on after a talk, tea or coffee could be provided. We continued with our usual programme of talks and devotional evenings. The talks were usually given by members but sometimes we had guest speakers. On December 5th the guest speaker was Dr. Ainslee Meares; his subject was 'Psychology and Aspects of Eastern Religions'. The Committee discussed the format of the devotional evenings which usually followed this pattern- recitation of the Salutations and Precepts followed by a reading from the Dhammapada or one of the well known Suttas, followed by a period of meditation followed by a light supper. We had a small shrine, a small Buddha rupa, flowers, incense. We liked to involve everyone in the ceremony and everyone went forward to place a flower on the shrine. Sometimes the Salutations and the Precepts were in Pali (favoured by the traditionalists) sometimes in English (favoured by those who thought that language meant more to beginners). Sometimes both languages were used.

About this time new members seemed to gravitate towards the B.S.V. amongst them a young student from Nepal and some Sri Lankans, whose dedication to the Dhamma, fresh ideas and enthusiasm contributed in many ways to the B.S.V. I remember - amongst others, Chandra, Wickrama (whom we called Wix), Ranjith, and Soma and Sujata Perera and their children. They decorated my house beautifully for Vesak which was celebrated on May 1st. They offered to organize a fund raising dinner. First of all we had a 'food tasting' evening to see how the 'Aussie' palates would adjust to hot spicy food. They adjusted very well and on Saturday May 17th our first international dinner was held. It was a great success - 37 people, delicious food and a happy atmosphere.

The next big occasion was on June 1969 - a Buddhist Symposium, the first of its kind in Australia. Larry and Sandra Fayers- Jessup and I went to Warburton to look for a suitable venue and eventually found a guesthouse

that could provide simple accommodation at a reasonable price. We reported back to the Committee and it was booked for the Queen's Birthday holiday weekend. This was the programme:

Saturday morning a talk on the historical background of Buddhism by Len Henderson. After lunch the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path by Len Bullen followed by a panel discussion with Len Bullen, Ken Shand and me. In the evening a devotional meeting. Sunday morning a talk on Mahayana and Theravada by Len Henderson. After lunch a talk on Buddhist psychology by Len Bullen followed by a talk on Mindfulness and Meditation by me. In the evening we showed slides of Nepal taken by David Templeman. On Monday morning Len Bullen spoke on the Ultimate Goal of Buddhism. The weather was cold and the living conditions simple - almost spartan, but the general feeling of the Symposium was one of good fellowship and quiet enjoyment.

Charles Knight came to Melbourne to attend the B.F.A. biennial meeting on August 24th. With him he had several tapes, excerpts from the Pali Canon and other material. We arranged two evenings, one on Thursday, the other on Saturday. Both were well attended. Somehow on crowded evenings, we all fitted in. On Thursday we listened to 'A Night in Gosinga Wood', 'The Enlightenment', 'Ambapali the Courtesan' and Pirith, a recording of the chanting with which Radio Ceylon opens its daily broadcasting. On Saturday we listened to Vesak greetings from Singapore, The Four Noble Truths (a recording of a talk given by a member of the N.S.W. Buddhist Society). The Buddha, a taped talk given on the ABC and a choral rendition of the Metta sutta composed by Lili Boulanger.

Another fund raising dinner was held on Saturday November 29th - another success socially and financially. 1970 seemed to follow a similar pattern to that of 1969. We felt that the B.S.V. was becoming known to more people. Membership was increasing and finances were stable. We continued to try to widen the scope of our activities and to improve our finances. We sold cards designed by some of our members which could be used as greeting cards on various occasions. There was a film night in April and on September 8th a slide night showing places of interest in Nepal. A new Constitution was drawn up and passed at the Annual General meeting on March 19th. With our improved finances it was possible to help worthy causes and we contributed to the Tibetan relief fund. We sent clothing and money to an orphanage in Bangla Desh. Then we adopted a young Tibetan boy, 14 year old Dhonyo Tenzin. We supported him through High School and University. Dhonyo and I exchanged letters for years and I urged other committee members to write to him. I have a photo of him at his graduation from Punjab University. He became a teacher of science and maths at the T.C.V. (Tibetan Children's Village) School in Dharmasala.

The June Symposium was successful. We followed the same sort of programme as the previous year. There were 42 full time participants, 8 part time.

In October Charles Knight wrote to let us know that he felt that he could not continue to publish Metta. Natasha was the editor but Charles attended to the printing and publishing and no one in Sydney was interested in taking on this work. Would we be interested? We discussed the possibility at the committee meeting in November and again at the Annual General Meeting in March 1971. In April on Good Friday morning - very early - Larry, Sandra and I set off in Larry's car to attend the Buddhist Federation's biennial meeting in Sydney. We arrived in the evening. Larry and Sandra went to a motel. I stayed with Charles and Natasha who shared a house. I have been told that they were obstinate and difficult to deal with but I found two elderly people who had worked hard to achieve their goals, who were anxious to see their work continued. This was my first meeting with the redoubtable Natasha. She was polite and welcoming. I felt at ease with her.

Next morning Charles showed us his work room and explained the whole process of printing, collating and eventually mailing copies of Metta to members of the New South Wales Society, the B.S.V. individual subscribers and publishers of exchange publications. Quite a big task we realized. Then the B.F.A. meeting was held. It was agreed that the publication of Metta be transferred to Victoria and the representatives of the N.S.W. Society agreed to lend the B.F.A. money to buy a printing machine in Victoria. Most of the B.F.A. administrative work was transferred to Victoria with Larry as editor and publisher of Metta. The July issue was published in Melbourne. All went well. Many hands helped with the typing, the collating, the posting. It contained a tribute to Charles Knight for his many years of dedicated work.

In June the B.S.V. held its third symposium in Warburton. This time there was a difference. We had with us a young Sri Lankan monk, the Venerable Somaloka who had recently arrived in Sydney at the invitation of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. He stayed on in Melbourne after the Symposium, talking to us in a friendly and practical way. We were already talking of the possibility of purchasing a property so that a vihara could be established. Throughout 1971 various fund raising functions were held including an international dinner with a sari parade and a display of batik. A lot of inspiration came from the late Soma Perera who succeeded in arousing and maintaining enthusiasm. His skill in arranging fund raising evenings and donations was a real boon to the B.S.V. We were still a small society but growing steadily. There was a friendly co-operative feeling. We felt that we had achieved a lot in a few years and were ready to move on.

But there was a cloud on the horizon - on my horizon and therefore likely to move onto the horizon of the B.S.V. I discovered that the house I had bought a few years earlier needed repairs - not just renovations but repairs and I had no money. I had to tell the committee that I would have to sell the house and buy a smaller and cheaper house. I was unhappy at having to do this but I had no choice. I looked for something suitable in Carlton but could not find anything even remotely suitable. At last I found a place in Elwood. It was not as big as the house in Carlton but there was a big room in the front of the house that could be used as a meeting room. There was short period of time while I moved to Elwood during which time the B.S.V. meetings were held in Larry's flat in North Melbourne then meetings resumed at 78 Ruskin St, Elwood. The usual meetings continued in 1972 - the celebration of Vesak, a symposium in June, fund raising functions, meditation evenings and committee meetings with long discussions. The Venerable Somaloka was asked to attend a meditation retreat in August but the venue which had been booked burnt down and the weekend was canceled. A weekend in October was booked at the Bungalow in Mount Macedon. This was an ideal venue for a retreat - a friendly old rambling sort of a building set in beautiful bushland and there were tennis courts ideal for walking meditation. For many a half-hour - or longer - did we walk across those tennis courts. The Venerable Somoloka's presence was a great asset and the weekend was written up in Metta. What was not written in the report but was discussed at the committee meeting was the fact that despite the rule of silence some participants could not remain silent. Once they were not in the presence of the bhikku they would talk. What to do? Let all participants know in advance that Noble Silence prevails at retreats. Be firm but not censorious.

In February 1973 we became aware of the arrival in Sydney of two bhikkus from Thailand, the Chao Khun Pariatkavi and Phra Khantipalo (an English bhikku). A letter was sent asking them to come to our symposium in June. They came to Melbourne by train on Friday June 1st. David Templeman brought them and Natasha Jackson (who also traveled on the train but in a coach distant from the bhikkus) to my place in Elwood. Later we were taken to Mount Evelyn where the Symposium was being held.

Phra Khantipalo gave the talks. In person he was tall, thin, almost emaciated, but he emanated a lot of strength. His knowledge of Buddhism was prodigious - so was his ability to pass on that knowledge. His guidance in meditation was strict, at times severe, yet there was compassion there and in relaxed moments a sense of humour shone through the severity.

In addition to the talks there were discussion groups and we saw slides of various temples in Thailand. There was a presentation to the B.S.V. of a beautiful painted scroll from the Sydney Chinese Buddhist Society. There was a memorial service for the father of one of our members who had died recently. Phra Khantipalo and the Chao Khun stayed on in Melbourne for several days. One day they came to my place for lunch and we went to the National Gallery to look at the Eastern Section. On May 11th they came for lunch and walked along the beach before they were taken to Spencer St. for their return to Sydney.

Natasha attended the weekend at Mount Evelyn and then stayed with me. Despite the fact that we seemed different in temperament (she told me that she thought I was too tolerant and I thought she got too 'hung up' on some of the inevitable discrepancies of life) we got on well together. The biennial meeting of the Federation was held. It was good to have a meeting with Natasha and another representative of the N.S.W. Society although there was nothing very special to report. Metta was appearing regularly. Larry left Melbourne and went to Western Australia. When he resigned as editor of Metta Len Henderson became editor for two years until he resigned because of work duties. Then I became editor. Various members of the B.S.V attended to the printing until we eventually had it printed by commercial printers.

Throughout 1973 discussions continued on the Vihara project, especially on the need to raise more money. We were approached by a Mr. S. who said he was willing to lend us money to facilitate the purchase of a house if we in turn could provide him with accommodation in the house. On reflection we knew that such an arrangement would not work out for the benefit of all concerned.

Venerable Somaloka was to have come for a meditation weekend in October but a last minute plane strike put an end to his visit. We still held the retreat - 25 attended. We supplemented the sitting and the walking meditation with readings from The Heart of Buddhist Meditation by the Venerable Nyanaponika and readings of Buddhist texts. We arranged a retreat for December and this time no strike intervened. The Venerable Somaloka was with us. On November 28th a special meeting was called 'to discuss the Buddhist House Fund and proposals for usage of existing funds.' There was a thorough examination and evaluation of the situation. We needed to raise more money but there seemed to be enough enthusiasm and determination to carry on. Another special meeting was held in February 1974. So many plans and possibilities were discussed! Should we form a co-operative? Should we elect trustees? I don't want to give the impression that we thought of nothing else. We were following the usual programme of talks, meditation and study groups.

There were some Thai bhikkus living in a little house in South Melbourne. One of them, Phra Prasert spoke fluent English and some members of the B.S.V. went to hear his talks. We asked him and another bhikku to come to a

meditation retreat at Mount Macedon March 1st to 3rd and again we benefited from the presence of experienced meditators.

In the March issue of Metta we published an account of a group called the Buddhist Family also a note to the effect that we would be happy to mention other groups in Australia, even if they were not members of the B.F.A. Of course we hoped that other groups would join the B.F.A. but we were happy to let it be known that other groups were emerging in Australia. The Vesak issue of Metta was dedicated to the Australian Buddhist Vihara, the first vihara established in this country in a beautiful area in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Its spiritual director was the Venerable Somaloka. This was an historic occasion and we wanted to record it.

Our 6th Symposium was held in June. Thirty people attended with three children and four-day visitors, also a family dog, a well-behaved member of the canine species whose only offence was to run off with Barry's walking boots. Group discussions were featured at this Symposium, each group consisting of 8 or 10 people with a group leader whose duty it was not to lead the group but to see that everyone got a 'fair go' in questioning and commenting. Another weekend was held November 22nd to 24th. We listened to taped talks by Phra Kantipalo, had group discussions and the usual sitting and walking meditations.

In August two Tibetan lamas came to Melbourne, Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, accompanied by a nun Thubten Kunzang. They gave several talks in Melbourne and came to the B.S.V. on Sunday evening August 25th. I had a busy day moving - or should I say removing - furniture to make as much space as possible for the expected 'full house'.

When the lamas arrived they sat in the kitchen drinking tea with David Templeman who spoke - speaks - fluent Tibetan. Fifty came that night and I think all who were there were impressed not only by the talk but also by the demeanour of the lamas, the happiness that they emanated. They left Melbourne to go to a meditation course in Queensland, an account of which appeared in the March 1975 issue of Metta.

1975. Discussion on the possibility of buying a house continued encouraged by a friendly interview with a bank manager in which it seemed that our request for a loan would be regarded favourably. It had been decided that the best way to deal with the legal requirements for the B.S.V.'s ownership of property would be to have a body of trustees. A general meeting was called for February 5th. This was 'to adopt several resolutions including the establishment of a body of 5 trustees and to approve in principle a Trust Deed'. A ballot paper was included for the election of trustees. Two were elected for two years and three for four years. Eventually we applied for incorporation. This was granted in July 1991. The B.S.V. became The Buddhist Society of Victoria Inc.

There was a weekend at Mount Macedon Friday February 21st to Sunday 23rd with Samanera Dharmayoti, a novice of the Christchurch (New Zealand) branch of the Friends of Western Buddhism who had with him taped talks by the Venerable Sangharshita, founder of the FOWB. This was a different sort of weekend - more informal. We had a session on communication skills, using simple sentences, body language, facial expressions, etc., etc. It was a lively exercise with laughter.

A mediation course was held at Mount Macedon March 27th to April 6th under the guidance of Phra Khantipalo. It was firmly disciplined and we followed a timetable of sitting/ walking meditation, interviews with Phra Khantipalo, silence. (Again. out of the presence of the bhikku there were those who found it difficult to maintain silence.) After the course Phra Khantipalo stayed in Melbourne for several days giving talks at colleges and universities and talks and advice to the B.S.V.

And all the time the search for a suitable property continued. In May one of our members who lived in Richmond saw a house for sale that looked as though it could be suitable. Some of us went to look at it on May 17th. It was a good site, immediately opposite a pleasant park. Phra Khantipalo in his talks to us had pointed out the advantages of close access to a park or a large garden, a necessity for meditating bhikkus and their walking meditation. The house seemed to be in reasonably good condition but we would have to make some improvements.

I shall not go into details regarding the purchase of the house - the time and the energy involved. I could write pages describing the meetings, the discussions, the extra money we had to raise. It is enough to say that a deposit was paid in June and the balance on September 18th. So with the help of a bank loan and extra financial help from members there it was, our vihara, our Buddhist House, not a large house but enough for our immediate needs. There were four medium sized rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom. toilet, a front verandah and a small sun porch at the back, a small front garden and a back garden. There was much to be done - some restumping and the removal of a wall so that two rooms could be made into one large enough for Dhamma talks and/or meditation and the garden needed lot of attention. We started to hold 'working bees'. They became a regular feature of life at Buddhist House.

We moved the Buddha rupas, furniture, kitchen utensils, etc. into the house in October. One of our members, Kester, asked if he could live there for a few weeks and he and his dog and his cat Emma stayed there happily till they moved on.

An English bhikku Phra Dhammanando with an Australian samanera Rod Plant arrived on November 15th and stayed for a few weeks. Phra Dhammanando (Tan Don) gave talks and guidance in meditation.

In November we heard of the death of Charles Knight. He died on November aged 85. A skillful organizer, he had helped to build the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. He had printed and published Metta for years. He had attended overseas meetings of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

He had helped the B.S.V. at a time when we needed encouragement and those of us who knew him remembered him with respect and affection.

1976 saw the usual programme of talks and meditation. Vesak was celebrated on May 15th and Phra Dhammanando was with us for a few days. The Venerable Somoloka came to Melbourne in October and there was a retreat at Mount Macedon. In December Phra Dhammanando came to Melbourne. At the same time we had a visit from a well-known Thai bhikku Tan Achha Teyte accompanied by two bhikkus, a nun and a lay woman. We had not expected so many visitors but after much telephoning suitable accommodation was successfully arranged.

Throughout 1976 a lot of activity at the house was connected with improvements, with plumbing, painting, gardening.

1977 followed a similar pattern. Vesak was celebrated on May 7th - a happy occasion in our new and vastly improved meeting place. Phra Khantipalo arrived at the end of May. He gave talks and conducted two-day seminars. A big wooden sign 'Buddhist House' was put up on the front of the verandah and Phra Khantipalo declared the house officially open. An enjoyable event in the B.S.V. calendar was International Cultural Night on Saturday August 27th organized by Prabhati Milton. There were dance groups from many countries, music and a recitation of poetry. Not only was the evening a cultural and artistic success, it was a success financially - a full house benefiting the Buddhist House Fund.

1978 started off with fund raising activities, an International Dinner and a Bargain Bazaar at which all sorts of amazing bargains were displayed. There was a very happy occasion when some Burmese Buddhists provided a delightful lunch for B.S.V. members (not a fund raising occasion). We went to Mount Macedon for a weekend March 10th to 13th. The Venerable Dr. Nandiswarra came to Buddhist House in April. It was only a short visit but his presence and his talks attracted a lot of interest. Born in Sri Lanka, ordained in 1950, he had traveled widely in dhammaduta work. He was the Director of the Maha Bodhi Institute in Madras, a centre caring for disadvantaged children. He spoke on Dhamma and the practical application of Dhamma particularly in helping others.

We had several guest speakers - Dr. Rahula of Indian Studies, Melbourne University, Dr. Ian Mabbett of Monash University, Andre Sollier, Zen artist and teacher and Ilse Ledermann who spoke to us on the Eight Worldly Winds: Gain and loss, praise and blame, honour and dishonour, happiness and sorrow. We were impressed by her clear, incisive presentation of Dhamma. She went overseas to become a nun and as such she is remembered - Ayya Khema, cofounder with Phra Khantipalo of Wat Buddha Dhamma, founder of the Nuns' Island Parappaduwa in Sri Lanka and Buddha Haus in Germany, the well-known teacher who taught in her inimitable way till her death in 1997.

From time to time we had tenants in the house. Sometimes these arrangements worked out, sometimes they were uneasy. For a while we had a problem tenant. We had much to learn from tenancy. Learning, learning, always learning. A little cat, pretty and demure adopted us. We called her Lady. She stayed with us for several years. Phra Khantipalo called her Ahimseka, the harmless one. In August we heard of a Thai bhikkhu, Phra Boonyarith, who was living at the back of a little house in Richmond. Beatrice Ribush and I went to see him, to see if he was being properly cared for. He smoked a pipe and seemed to talk in a mixture of English, Pali and Thai. He came to Buddhist House and gave talks and guidance in meditation (again in mixed languages). But the Dhamma was there and he was listened to with great respect.

In December 1978 two young Australian bhikkhus trained in Thailand came to Buddhist House for a short visit, Phra Purisso and Phra Jagaro. The house was open every evening for meditation and discussion and questions, if asked for. It was good to have this meditative atmosphere in the evenings.

So the years passed. 1978 was soon over and it was 1979. There was a weekend at Kalorama but it was poorly attended because of the mishaps with the preliminary arrangements. There were only ten adults and one child in attendance.

Nevertheless we made good use of the Venerable Sadhatissa's book *The Buddha's Way* and the little boy Oliver was a delightful child. He entertained us with drawings of people, cats and submarines and in his own innocent way contributed much to the weekend.

We were looking for a bhikkhu who could stay for more than a few days. Dr. Rahula of Indian Studies at Melbourne University (himself a former bhikkhu) recommended the Venerable Gnanaratna. He was an elderly bhikkhu with a great knowledge of the Pali Canon. He arrived on November 2nd bringing with him books and a beautiful Buddha-rupa, the gift of the President of Sri Lanka and the Department of Culture. We drew up a special timetable so that we could make suitable arrangements for his care and maintenance, the offering of food, etc., etc. We still had much to learn about the proper maintenance of the house and suitable conditions for a bhikkhu in residence. We had a service on New Year's Eve. The Shrine looked beautiful with many summer flowers, roses, carnations, hydrangeas. The house was full to overflowing, a happy ending to 1979.

On the whole the seventies had been happy years. The B.S.V. had grown but it was still a relatively small society, and the members, despite differences of background, views and opinions remained in close contact, with open discussion.

The Annual General Meeting in March 1980 opened with the *Ti-Sarana* and *Panca Sila* in Pali then in English and at the end the Venerable Gnanaratna gave us some helpful advice about the care and maintenance of Buddhist House, explaining "It is easy to buy an elephant but the difficulty is in keeping it." He suggested that it would be an advantage for us to look for an Australian bhikkhu who would understand local conditions.

On May 3rd he left us to return to his duties in Sri Lanka.

The Venerable Shanti Bhadra arrived on May 25th, just in time for Vesak celebrations on May 31st. He seemed to settle in to Buddhist House very well. He was used to living in Western countries. His Dhammaduta work had taken him into Germany, England, Scotland and Brazil. Talks were arranged, meditation evenings, Abhidhamma classes. He attended a peace vigil in Saint Paul's Cathedral where an interfaith service was held. He was asked to *danas* in various homes. He followed the Vinaya rules very carefully but his friendly personality made it easy to talk to him. He never talked 'down' to lay people.

Sunday October 26th saw the celebration of *Katina* at Buddhist House. As far as I know this was the first celebration of this kind in Australia. *Katina* celebrates the end of the rains retreat, that time of the year when a bhikkhu stays close to his temple in study, meditation, contemplation. We could not have the full formal *Katina* celebrations. We had only one bhikkhu but we tried to follow the spirit and feeling of the occasion. The house was beautifully decorated and a small tree was set up. Offerings were attached to the tree. From then on whenever we had a member of the Sangha with us we observed *Katina*.

In March 1981 we had a short visit from a well-known and popular Sri Lank bhikkhu, the Venerable Piyadassi. He had visited the B.S.V. sixteen years ago when we had meetings in a small room in the city. We were happy to welcome him. His visit attracted a lot of attention and the talks and the *danas* were fully attended.

There was a weekend at Hepburn Springs held April 3rd to 5th with the Venerable Shanti Bhadra. In past retreats with bhikkhus there had been advice and interviews. Venerable Shanti Bhadra left us to our own devices. He gave us a very direct no-nonsense sort of introductory talk - "Why have you come to this weekend?" A timetable was put on the notice board. Venerable Shanti Bhadra advised us to make the most of the weekend, this short break from our worldly commitments. Then we were on our own. Some participants disciplined themselves. Some found it difficult.

Vesak was celebrated May 16th and 17th, with a special service for children. We continued to ask guest speakers to our meetings. Our guest speaker on June 3rd was Professor Peter Singer, the well-known philosopher and activist in the area of animal liberation. As well as being involved in Buddhist Society administration I was busy with Buddhist Federation correspondence and the editing and publishing of *Metta*. I was trying to improve its appearance, but hampered by lack of funds. Some small changes had been made - especially with designs for the cover which were done by Christy.

In August the biennial meeting of the B.F.A. was held in Brisbane. I went there and was met by Dr. Gunasekera who took me to his home for lunch. I stayed in the home of Klaas de Jong where the meeting was held. It was attended by representatives of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W., the B.S. of Queensland, Wat Buddha Dhamma

and the N.S.W. Chinese Buddhist Society and of course the B.S.V. We discussed matters relating to Metta and the B.F.A. in a friendly and hospitable atmosphere. Also in August I started to attend (as representative of the B.S.V.) meetings which were being held to discuss plans for the anticipated visit of the Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan groups did most of the planning and organizing but other Buddhist groups were there to give a helping hand.

On October 29th I saw by chance - chance? - on TV, a Buddhist community some twenty in number in England renovating an old house, inspired by a relaxed and smiling Thai bhikkhu, Ajahn Cha. I was watching the beginning of Chithurst Monastery.

The year ended with a wonderful gift to the B.S.V. One evening after a talk, I reminded those present of the empty bowl sitting by the door, just waiting for donations. I reminded those present of our current expenses and the big bank loan that we still owed. One of our young members, Rob Fraser, decided to do something about it. A few days later we were presented with a cheque that completely covered the bank loan. We were freed from the burden of the bank loan and could attend to much needed renovations at Buddhist House.

1982 had an interesting start with a film and slide night in February. Kusum showed us slides and films of places of historic interest in India, places where Gautama the Buddha lived and taught. Even to look at those places on the screen, the closest that some of us would ever get to the reality, meant a great deal. Phra Khantipalo visited us in March. There were more renovations at Buddhist House. A new bathroom came into being with gleaming tiles and better plumbing. We installed gas heating to minimize Melbourne's cold, damp winters. Some of us went to a factory in Preston where they made small self-contained bungalows. It was our intention to install something like that in the back garden, which would provide more accommodation for visiting or resident sangha.

The big event in 1982 was the Dalai Lama's visit, his first visit to Australia. This aroused enormous interest and needed a lot of careful handling. That as many people as possible should have access to his presence in Australia was important. So was security.

Those who arranged the visit did a good job. The Dalai Lama arrived in Melbourne on August 10th. To meet him was a memorable experience. So much has been said about him that I hesitate to add my own inadequate words. He has often described himself as a simple monk and indeed could give that impression but there is a great strength in that apparent simplicity and he certainly emanates loving-kindness and compassion. And then there is his sense of humour - a gentle all embracing kind of humour. A detailed account of his visit appeared in the September issue of Metta.

A young Australian monk, the Venerable Dhammika, formerly Paul Boston, came to Buddhist House in October. He had been a lay member of the B.S.V. and the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. before he went overseas.

Many young people were attracted to his talks.

A holiday weekend in January 1983 was the occasion for a retreat at Mount Macedon under the guidance of Venerable Dhammika. The rising bell went at 5.15 am. Usually I got up early and went for a walk. I did not know that the beautiful areas that I walked through would be destroyed that summer by a ravaging bushfire. At the retreat we followed the customary programme of sitting, walking, interviews and discussion in the evenings. The rule of silence was observed. Venerable Dhammika stayed with us until April 17th. Venerable Shanti Bhadra had gone to Queensland for a visit but he telephoned and wrote to us explaining that he was reluctant to return to Melbourne and its cold winters. He felt that he could function better in sunny Queensland. So we were without a bhikkhu but the usual programmes continued with members and guest speakers giving talks.

The biennial meeting of the B.F.A. was held in Melbourne in October. The membership had increased and over 300 copies of Metta went out four times a year. But it seemed to me that too much Federation work was being done in Victoria and that it would be better to have others involved. The attendance at the meeting was small. There were only two interstate representatives. I was willing to continue as editor of Metta, if need be (indeed I liked that sort of work) but I offered my resignation in the hope that another B.F.A. member would step forward. Letters were sent to all B.F.A. members and the Queensland Buddhist Society offered to edit and publish Metta and attend to B.F.A. correspondence. The December issue of Metta appeared at the end of the year, edited by Klaas de Jong, a different layout but well presented, with interesting contents, including news notes on the early history of Metta and an obituary for the Venerable Narada (one of the early bhikkhus who visited Australia) written by Shanti Bhadra.

In January 1984 Phra Khantipalo was with us for two days and again it was a time of 'full houses' and it was the same when Ayya Khema came in February. Her talks had that clear incisive quality that we had noticed when

she spoke to us as Ilse Lederman. She left us to go to a retreat at the Atisha Centre near Bendigo. We looked forward to her return in 1985.

The Venerable Ariyadhamma arrived on the 23rd and was with us for a few days. He was well known for the beauty of his chanting and his presence attracted many people.

It was at this time that a project was put forward inspired by some members of the Thai community, to establish a Buddhist country centre. Meetings were held, the Buddhist Foundation of Victoria was formed, and a committee elected. It was multicultural, attracting the interests of various Buddhist groups. Phra Khantipalo was interested and advised us on the sort of property we should look for.

A kuti (a small self-contained bungalow) was put up in the back garden of Buddhist house. The Venerable Dhammika returned in May. Vesak was celebrated at the Prince Phillip Theatre of Melbourne University with a large multi-cultural attendance.

In June we lost one of our pioneer Buddhists, Len Bullen, who died on June 26th. A founding member of the B.S.V., he was a man of many interests. He had a warm friendly personality and a delightful sense of humour. He was most hospitable and often asked friends to his house where all sorts of subjects were discussed until the small hours of the morning. His *Technique of Living* was published by the Buddhist Publication Society of Sri Lanka. Indeed, I might mention in passing that a number of B.S.V and B.S.N.S.W. contributors to *Metta* had some of their writings published by the B.P.S. - Charles, Natasha, Rosemary Taplin, Les Oates.

We lost another member when Soma Parera died in October. He too was a pioneer - not of the B.S.V. when it was first formed but of its renaissance in the sixties after it had come close to extinction. He had stimulated our search for a vihara, had encouraged when it seemed a difficult project. He and other members of the Perera family had organized many of the fund raising functions that helped us to buy the house. He was a true Buddhist, much loved by his family and friends, respected by all who knew him.

Venerable Dhammika's presence at Buddhist House continued to attract young people and the talks and retreats were well attended. Some retreats were held at John Hall's property in the country. John also extended hospitality to individual meditators.

Katina was celebrated in November 11th, with three bhikkhus in attendance. the Venerable Dhammika, Phra Chan Khun Duvirayan and Phra Yoi Bussiyo.

Two well known bhikkhus visited in 1985, the Venerable Gunaratna of the Washington Vihara and the Venerable Mahinda, at that time with the Singapore Buddhist Mission, who gave us a talk on the Mangala Sutta in which he drew attention to the great depth, the amplitude of this beautiful sutta.

George Ho and I went to Brisbane on March 29th to attend the B.F.A. biennial meeting, which was held on the 30th. A new constitution had been drawn up and amongst other changes it was suggested that the B.F.A. journal be called 'Buddhism Today', because 'Few people understand what is meant by Metta'. Most of the administrative work was transferred to Sydney, including the publication of the journal. It was called 'Buddhism Today' with a sub-heading: 'Formerly known as Metta', and appeared in its new title, edited by Keith Ong in January 1986. Since then it has been published regularly, nicely printed, with articles, book reviews and news items, similar in content to the old *Metta* but more in keeping with today's Buddhist scene.

On May 4th a celebration of Vesak organized by the Buddhist Foundation was held in the Prince Phillip Theatre and attended by members of the various Buddhist groups in Melbourne. The Buddhist Foundation of Victoria was doing good work, bringing various Buddhist groups together but the original intention of establishing a country centre was put aside, and it seemed that there was more need for the establishment of a city temple and the interest moved in that direction towards the establishment of Wat Dhammarangsee. On May 5th there was a celebration of Vesak at Buddhist House. The House and the garden were decorated with flowers, lights, flags - many flags in honour of the 100th anniversary of the flag. The Buddhist flag was designed by an American, Colonel Olcott whose hard work had done much to revive Buddhism in Ceylon (as it was called in those days of colonialism when Buddhism had been suppressed). The colours in the flag are said to represent the colours in the Buddha's aura. Colonel Olcott thought that such a flag would be a symbol for the unification of Buddhists. A television crew from SBS recorded the B.S.V. Vesak which must have been seen by many viewers on their TV screens.

Venerable Dhammika left in May to go overseas. A farewell picnic lunch was held in the Botanic Gardens.

Years ago a small B.S.V. newsletter had been produced. Now seemed a good time to start again. The first issue appeared in September 1985. It started off in small way but it grew and grew, the presentation changing a little each time with changes of editor. It became a valuable asset for the Society, dispensing news, giving publicity for future events, with an occasional article.

Phra Khantipalo came to Buddhist House on November 11th and was with us till the 22nd. Again his presence ensured large attendances with listeners intent on every word. Ayya Khema arrived on December 26th to conduct a six-day retreat at Lovely Banks near Geelong. It followed the usual pattern, sitting, walking, interviews. We would have liked to have more of Ayya's teaching but she had other commitments and could not stay with us.

February 1986 saw a good start to the year when Phra Khantipalo arrived to conduct a course, 'Calm and Insight' at the Buddhist Summer School organized every year in Melbourne by the Kagyu Centre. He gave talks at Buddhist House and there was a retreat at Lovely Banks, starting every morning with a Loving-Kindness meditation.

Ajahn Jagaro, the Abbott of Wat Bodhinyana, came to us in February. Some of his talks told us of his early years in a monastery in Thailand, a harsh apprenticeship, not understanding the language, with the external discomforts and his own internal distractions. His talk on Going for Refuge drew attention to the meaning of these words so often recited at Buddhist ceremonies.

The Venerable Gangodawila Soma arrived on May 23rd. There had been a delay with his visa. In those days it was difficult for the powers that be to understand that monks were coming here as teachers but were not joining the work force and not being paid in cash, though they were fully supported. The Sri Lankan High Commissioner came to the rescue and Venerable Soma arrived, just in time for the Vesak celebrations, which were spread over three days. There were traditional ceremonies on the 23rd; a musical evening on the 24th, held in the main hall of Swinburne College where a shrine had been set up for the occasion and beautifully decorated with flowers and lanterns. There were celebrations at Buddhist House on the Sunday. The house was full to overflowing. The hospitality of Sri Lankan members and their ability to deal with crowded conditions were lessons in dana. They dealt very good humouredly with difficult conditions.

The Venerable Soma seemed to settle in to life in the West very well. He gained confidence in the use of the English language, both spoken and written. He wrote two articles for the Newsletter - 'The Heart of Buddhism' and 'Concentration Without Sila is of No Avail'. He attended to his duties as a bhikkhu in the most exemplary way. Many came to hear his exposition of the Teachings. Many came for help and advice.

Katina was celebrated in October. The Venerable Soma's visa expired in November and a farewell puja was held on the 23rd.

We were visited by the Venerable Sugunanda and the Venerable Pemananda from the Australian Buddhist Vihara in New South Wales (Australia's first vihara). They were with us for a few days in September and the Venerable Sugatananda, who had spent time in a Zen monastery in Korea, gave a talk on meditation. Phra Khantipalo accompanied by Sister Susanna returned in December. It was a good end to the year. It had been a busy year with various plans and projects taking shape. Already we realized that we needed more room. How could we renovate and enlarge Buddhist House? There was an interest in establishing a country centre. Already two fund raising evenings had been held.

An inaugural meeting was held on October 29th to discuss the formation of a Buddhist Council and another meeting was held on November 19th. There was a Buddhist Council in Brisbane and one in Sydney. With so many Buddhist groups in Melbourne a collective voice could do good work. But after initial enthusiasm the plan faltered and came to nothing. It was not until 1995 that a Buddhist Council of Victoria came into being.

Ajahn Jagaro was with us January 5th to 21st 1987. He was a participant in the Summer School, representing Theravada Buddhism. He gave talks at Buddhist House in the evenings and again his talks had that experiential quality – what he said was not learned from books.

On January 23rd I went to Sydney to attend the Buddhist Federation meeting. Buddhism Today (formerly Metta) was doing well – it still is doing well. It must be one of the oldest, longest established Buddhist publications in the world. There was some talk of plans for the B.F.A. but the rest is silence. Nevertheless the B.F.A. had done good work in bringing some Buddhist groups together and for anyone interested in the history of early Buddhism in Australia the pages of Metta provide valuable information.

An English born bhikkhu the Venerable Abinyana came to us in February. Modest and gentle he drew attention to all that we could learn from the 'little things' of daily life. I was reminded of some passages in the Venerable

Nyanaponika's book *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. A quiet bhikku but obviously possessing real strength he had taken the Dhamma into areas of palpable suffering.

Ajahn Sumedho of Chithurst Monastery and Venerable Subito were with us from March 18th to the 21st of March. Ajahn Sumedho's robust and beneficent presence did a lot for the morale of the B.S.V. as did his talks, practical and encouraging. He pointed out to us the importance of seeing things as they really are. There was a workshop on HIV/AIDS on Friday the 20th. Ajahn Sumedho had already participated in one in the U.S.A. This one was organized by an AIDS support group. Some members of the B.S.V. helped and supplied afternoon tea. The atmosphere was friendly and informal. Ajahn Sumedho spoke in a reassuring way, realistic but positive, drawing attention to the Buddha's teaching with regard to the body, mind, sickness and death.

The Venerable Dhammika returned to Buddhist House in February 1987. He had a busy schedule with talks and meditations at Buddhist House and elsewhere, schools colleges, the Spa and Healing Festival in Daylesford, the Ballarat Meditation Group. He stayed with us till the end of June.

The B.S.V. celebrated Vesak on May 10th in the Hall at Swinburne College, then on May 13th, the day of the full moon at Buddhist House. On October 11th we had an evening of relaxation and enjoyment, thanks Prahbati Milton who had arranged an evening of Sri Lankan song and dance, a success aesthetically and financially.

Plans for extensions to Buddhist House had been submitted to Richmond Council. In August we were notified that the plans were not acceptable. An article on vihara extensions was published in the October-November newsletter. A special meeting was held on December 9th and we decided to proceed with an appeal to the Appeals Tribunal.

Phra Khantipalo arrived at the end of October. More full houses for his wonderful talks and a meditation retreat. The weather was hot and humid. Phra Khantipalo had to leave the retreat – temporarily - to attend a fund raising function. The journey there and back must have been hellish. That day, just after his return he gave a talk on the Four Great Elements – earth (extension) water (cohesion) fire (temperature) and air (motion). This talk had a dramatic conclusion as – right on cue – the heavens opened, thunder roared, lightning flashed and rain fell in torrents!

Ayya Khema was with us from the 12th to the 22nd of December. Her talks attracted many and the retreat at Greyfriars, Mount Eliza repeated the success of earlier retreats. But an outstanding feature of her visit was a seminar on December 16th – Patriarchal Religions and Feminine Spirituality. We had advertised it outside the B.S.V. and women of diverse faiths and backgrounds attended. It was crowded – mostly women and a few men. Calmly and quietly Ayya Khema looked at male-female relationships in patriarchal religions. There was appreciative laughter as she drew attention to some of the absurdities therein. She recommended that women make good use of both sides of their brains and that they develop suitable strategies of independence. A very successful evening.

In 1988 several members of the Sangha came to Buddhist House. The Venerable Olane Ananda arrived in February. With his friendly personality and practical approach to the Teachings, he seemed to be at home with us. His Dhammaduta work kept him on the move and we called him the Flying Dutchman.

The Venerable Kassapa from Rockhill Hermitage in Sri Lanka came to us from May to August when he had to return to the Hermitage for the Rains Retreat. Over the Queen's Birthday Weekend in June the Venerable Munindo from Chithurst Monastery was with us. He told us of his experiences as a newly ordained bhikkhu and he gave us advice on how to cope with those unwanted visitors who are with us so often in various disguises. 'Oh, it's you again – let me look at you' ('You' being greed, aversion or delusion). Don't deny their existence – face up to them.

We had guest speakers, one of whom the Venerable Adrian Feldman was ordained in a Kopan Monastery in Nepal in 1975. He spoke on Going for Refuge on October 13th and again on November 3rd on Anger.

One Sunday morning, August 14th, Sulak Sivaraksa gave us a talk, some of us had heard of him and read some of his writings and were interested to meet this devoted lay exponent of Dhamma. A dedicated follower of a well known Thai teacher, the Venerable Buddhadasa, he talked to us of the great benefit of following Dhamma in ordinary life and the implementation of kindness and compassion in every day living.

On Saturday morning July 23rd Buddhist House received a visit from Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Mr. Premadasa spoke in English and in Sri Lankan and paid a tribute to the friendly relationship between Sri Lanka and Australia. In a short speech I gratefully acknowledged the support given to the B.S.V. by the Sri Lankan community in Melbourne.

All the usual activities continued throughout 1988, including a vegetarian dinner in April and a reenactment of a Jataka tale Vessanatra by the Sri Lankan Women's Association. Our appeal to the Appeals Tribunal was successful. We had the right to continue to hold meetings at Buddhist House and to submit amended plans to Richmond Council. But at a special meeting on December 14th after much discussion it was decided to defer any plans for extending Buddhist House and to postpone plans for a forest monastery.

The Venerable Piyadassi arrived on December 22nd. This was his third visit and we were happy to have him with us, even if for only a few days. He remembered the little house that he stayed in years ago and sent best wishes to his erstwhile hosts. Many came to hear his talks.

There was a good start to 1989 with a visit from Phra Khantipalo and we had a guest speaker who was in Melbourne for the Summer School, the Sayadaw Jagara, who spoke on conceptual thinking and anatta. Ayya Khema was with us from January 19th to February 8th with talks, meditation and a 10-day retreat. She came with me to the opening of the Women's Conference which was part of the Fifth Assembly of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (W.C.R.P.). This was held in Melbourne January 22nd to 28th 1989.

W.C.R.P. Australia was founded in this country after the first W.C.R.P. Assembly was held in Kyoto in 1970. It developed in Australia through a series of seminars, conferences and interfaith services attended by members of various faiths, including the B.S.V. The Fifth Assembly was a big event, held at Monash University and attended by representatives of various faiths from all over the world. Part of its programme was the Women's Conference, which conducted special talks and seminars. Ayya Khema came with me to the opening and her guided loving kindness meditation was the highlight of the day.

Our annual General Meeting was held in March. There was much to discuss – more improvements to the house, the wording of a revised constitution, general business, etc.

Venerable Sumedho came to us from April 11th to 15th. So that his talks could reach a wider audience we hired a hall on the 14th and 15th. Full houses again. There were interviews – the ABC and the Saturday Age newspaper. His presence and his talks were a real boost to the morale of the B.S.V.

Venerable Kassapa arrived in May. Vesak was celebrated with a dramatic performance of the story of Angulimala, produced by the Sri Lankan Women's Association and Vesak ceremonies were held on May 21st. Venerable Kassapa seemed to settle in quite happily with a busy programme of talks, meditations, counseling, talks to other groups locally, in the country or interstate. He encouraged the holding of Dhamma classes for children. Katina was celebrated on October 22nd.

Fundraising continued and we continued to make some small improvements to the house but we were looking at other properties. There were many things to be considered – the site, the structure of the building, parking facilities, proximity to public transport, the price, etc, etc.

Towards the end of the year the Venerable Kassapa had some health problems with his back and his digestive system. At last, after tests, it was found that he had gall bladder trouble and an operation was necessary.

He went to Ballarat for the operation and stayed there to recuperate.

The New Year in 1990 was ushered in with a visit from the Venerable Mahinda of the Australian Buddhist Mission in Ambarvale, N.S.W. Ayya Khema returned in January. There were talks and meditations at Buddhist House, a public talk at Toorak Library and a retreat January 26th to 29th. The Venerable Sayadaw Jagara of the Burmese Buddhist Temple in Sydney was with us from March 13th to 26th. His talks constantly drew attention to a meditative approach to daily living.

At the AGM in March I tendered my resignation from the presidency. I had been thinking of this for some time. I thought I should stand aside to make room for someone else. Satish was asked to accept nomination. He was well known as a dedicated member of the B.S.V. Rather reluctantly, for he had many work commitments, he accepted and was elected.

Phra Khantipalo came to us in April. There were public talks, talks at Buddhist House and a Retreat. The Venerable Maduluwawe Thero of Kotte Nagavihara in Sri Lanka stayed at Buddhist House from April 29th to early May. Vesak was celebrated on May 6th. Again the house was full and despite crowded conditions, a happy atmosphere prevailed. Ajahn Jagaro came to stay with us at the end of May. There were public talks at Carringbush Library in Richmond, a meditation workshop at Buddhist House and a retreat at Greyfriars Monastery. The Venerable Batuwanhene Sri Buddhakkhita Thero Sanghanayaka of Kalutara Walallawiti Korale was at Buddhist House June 24th to 29th. Two Sri Lankan bhikkus observed the rains Retreat at Buddhist House,

the Venerable Gampaha Pemasiri, chief incumbent of the Vipassana Bhavana Meditation Centre, Colombo and the Venerable Kotte Santindriya Thero of Dharamgavesi Buddha Vihara Colombo.

Their presence and the presence of other bhikkus attracted a large attendance to the Katina celebration, which was on October 7th.

Towards the end of October we had a visit from a well known Sri Lankan bhikku, the Venerable Dhammananda, the chief incumbent of the Buddhist Vihara in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. Well known for his Dhammaduta work and his writings he was an impressive speaker and the house was full again with people sitting on the verandah. A well-known lay teacher in Sri Lanka, Alec Robertson, came to Buddhist House in early November. A teacher of Dhamma for thirty years, he presented his talks in a clear straightforward way.

The Venerable Santihhito arrived in Melbourne on November 7th. He came from Wat Umong in Changmai, Thailand where he had been for fifteen years. Born in Germany, after a restless questioning adolescence, he discovered the teaching of the Buddha. It was not possible to be ordained in Germany at that time so he went to England for ordination as a Buddhist monk, then went to Thailand. Although English was not his native tongue, he made good use of the language, with a plentiful use of symbols and metaphors and many of his talks were quite poetic. I remember the talk in which he described the four walls that seem to enclose us and keep us from the path to liberation. First of all there is a wall of iron – this represents heavy forces within us and external to us that shut us away from the Path and incredibly heavy effort is needed to overcome this wall. There there is a wall of stone or brick – not so difficult because if you dislodge one brick the rest will slowly fall apart, then a wall of wood, which is tough and resistant but yields to strong pressure, then a wall of paper. This may seem like a real pushover. It represents the little habits, the harmless views, opinions and excuses that we use to justify our lack of application but the `paper wall' has an elusive strength and again sustained effort is needed to overcome this wall.

A weekend retreat at Buddhist House was arranged for December 15th and 16th and was very successful, a little unorthodox in that on the last afternoon we moved to the Botanic Gardens and sat on the oak lawn under the shade of the great oak trees.

At the end of November I heard of Natasha Jackson's death on November 26th. Outspoken, practical Natasha had contributed a lot to the beginnings of Buddhism in Australia. Imperfect? Yes, as we all are. It was a time to remember her many good qualities.

Ayya Khema arrived in January 1991 for the usual programme – participation in the Summer School, talks and meditation at Buddhist House, a public talk and a retreat at Greyfriars. She arrived in Melbourne just as the Gulf War started. All over the world many people were saddened at the thought of the death and destruction that would inevitably follow. Many of us in the B.S.V. felt that we would like to do something however small – about this. Ayya Khema was asked to give a public peace meditation. One of our younger members Shane who worked for Community Aid Abroad organized the evening in the Domain parkland near the Botanic Gardens. Some members of the B.S.V., others who had heard of the event and a number of passersby listened as Ayya Khema spoke of peace within and outward peace, of compassion and living, loving-kindness. The quiet evening sky, the trees, the listeners sitting, standing, Ayya's quiet voice – it was a picture to remember.

We had a guest speaker on January 24th – the Venerable Viradhammo from Bodhinyanaram Monastery in New Zealand. His talk was practical, helpful, tinged with a good sense of humour. In February, after Venerable Santihhito left us to return to Thailand, the Venerable Olande Ananda arrived with his teacher the Venerable Davidene Nyanissara. They were with us for two months and again it was noticeable – not only did the talks and meditation contribute to the well being of Buddhist House – the presence of such bhikkus was in itself a blessing.

The Annual General Meeting was held on April 24th. There was a lot to discuss – possible renovations to Buddhist House, the incorporation of the Society, amendments to the constitution, the election of office bearers. Satish had been president for a year. He had been a good president but his work commitments took him overseas and he could not attend meetings. For this reason he wished to resign. I was asked to become president again. No one else seemed willing to step forward so I agreed.

Ajahn Jagaro came to us on April 2nd. As always his visit attracted a lot of attention. His talks included public talks at Carringbush Library and there was a retreat at Mount Martha. Then it was time for Vesak. The Sri Lankan Women's Association put on a play, Vesak Pathum, on May 11th, a play in a contemporary setting. It was a great success and once again the proceeds went to Buddhist House. Vesak was celebrated on May 26th and 27th. We were happy to have Ajahn Brahnavamso with us, also a young Sri Lankan bhikkhu who was staying with us at the time. This was the Venerable Pannatissa. He was on a scholarship, studying humanities at Deakin University. We offered him accommodation so that he could study in quiet surroundings.

Ajahn Brahm was with us for nine days. He had a busy schedule, which included a visit to the Healesville Dhamma Group, a public talk on 'Joyous Living'. It was his first visit to Melbourne. Born in England, he became interested in Buddhism while young, went to Thailand, trained under Ajahn Chah. He and Ajahn Jagaro established Wat Bodhinyana in Western Australia in 1983. We were happy to have Ajahn Brahm with us. We appreciated his kindly, practical nature, his terrific sense of humour and his deep sense of Dhamma in the small things of daily life.

An invitation to stay at Buddhist House for the Rains Retreat was extended to Venerable Panatissa and Venerable Gnanaseeha Thera of Nalandaramaya, Nuggegodda, Sri Lanka, Research Assistant and Lecturer at the Post Graduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies at Kelanaya University, holder of the title 'Rajakiya Pandita', the highest degree in oriental studies given in Sri Lanka.

Katina was celebrated on November 3rd. There was a Katina procession through the park. Followed by the offering of the Katina robe, dana to the bhikkhus, a Katina sermon and a community lunch for everyone and thanks (in English) to all concerned from me and from Satish (in Sri Lanka). We were sorry to say goodbye to the Venerable Gnanaseeha. His extensive knowledge of the teachings of the Buddha encouraged many to look more closely at those teachings. He shared with us his deep knowledge of the life of the Buddha, the psychology, the philosophy to be found in the Teachings and the wisdom and compassion.

Phra Khantipalo came to Melbourne September 23rd to 30th and again his visit attracted many to Buddhist House. A public talk at South Yarra Library had a full house. Many of us had been listening to his talks for years. Now we were aware of differences and sensed a change in presentation.

In November we heard that Phra Khantipalo had disrobed. He moved into another area. He continued to teach as Laurence Mills still teaching today and his talks attract many.

Candima was with us from October 13-27. She had been ordained as a Buddhist nun and although she no longer wore the robe her life style was similar to that of a nun. Her programme contained Dhamma dialogues, devotional nights, Kalyana mitra sessions, a retreat and an all night sit in on October 26th. In these evenings with Candima and at the retreat the main feeling was one of cooperation. We were all working together and flowers, candles, poems, discussion - all brought forth aspects of Dhamma.

Two of Ajahn Chah's disciples were with us in December, the Venerable Puriso and the Venerable Sucinno. Venerable Puriso had stayed at Buddhist House in 1978 when he and Venerable Jagaro had come to Melbourne to visit their families. Since then we had heard of his conservation work in the forests of Thailand. We were happy to have these bhikkhus with us and we saw the old year in with an evening of talks, chanting and meditation.

In 1992 we spent a lot of time looking at various properties, still seeking a suitable building that could provide accommodation for the sangha and an area for talks and meditation. There were reported sightings, to be followed up eagerly, as we looked at anything that seemed at all suitable or maybe not totally suitable but with possibilities. Ayya Khema came to Melbourne for the Summer School. Then there was a retreat at Raymond Island, talks at Buddhist House, a talk to the Healesville Dhamma Group and a retreat at Greyfriars.

Ajahn Jagaro and the Venerable Sumangalo came to Buddhist House in February and gave support to the B.S.V. in many ways. Ajahn Jagaro gave talks at Buddhist House and to the Healesville Dhamma Group. He conducted workshops at RMIT University in the city. He gave much needed advice in our search for another property and he and Venerable Sumangalo looked at various places that came up for consideration. Venerable Sumangalo and Venerable Mahinda held a three-day retreat at Monash University and helped to revive the Melbourne University Buddhist Group. With all of this, Ajahn Jagaro and Venerable Sumangalo still had time to go walking with the B.S.V.'s dedicated walker, Dale. Their energy seemed boundless. The Newsletter featured a photo of the two bhikkhus with the caption, 'Have Robes and Sandals, will walk'.

The Annual General Meeting was held in March and again much of the time was spent discussing the 'long search' and our financial resources. The Venerable Dr K Sri Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thero came to Melbourne and gave talks at various venues, including Buddhist House. He participated in our dana lunch on Sunday and his presence and his talks attracted many.

In May we celebrated Vesak at two venues, first at Buddhist House then in a rented hall. This was to try and avoid over crowding. With us we had the Venerable Ganaseeha from the Kelaniya University in Sri Lanka and the Venerable Nyanadhamma, an Australian bhikkhu trained in Thailand.

Towards the end of May it seemed that the long search had been successful. We had found what seemed to be a suitable building on a large block of land with many trees. It made a good impression – it looked as though this could be the site for a vihara. The brick building could serve as a centre for talks and meditation and other buildings, kutis could be put up to accommodate the sangha. On May 28th our offer to purchase this property was accepted and a deposit was paid. A formal document safeguarding our interests and the interests of the owners was signed. The news was published in our June-July Newsletter under the heading 'The long search has ended' and again in the August-September issue 'The Vision Takes Place.' There was much to be done. There were consultations with town planners, architects, a consultant, and the local council. A proposed plan of the new vihara was published in the August-September newsletter. Fund raising continued. It was obvious that we would need a lot of financial backing for this new venture. Ajahn Jagaro returned to us for a few days in July and again his help and advice had a stabilizing influence.

Also in July our new teacher arrived. I went with another member of the B.S.V. to meet her at Tullamarine Airport. We saw a small, almost child-like figure in a nun's robe. This was Ayya Kheminda. Small she may have been but there was remarkable energy there. Her early years had been spent in Indonesia until the family returned to Holland where she lived, worked, married, had a child, became interested in Buddhism, went to Sri Lanka where she was ordained. She was Ayya Khema's successor on Parappaduwa Island after Ayya Khema's departure, then she went to Malaysia and Singapore till she accepted our invitation to come to Australia. She was happy to have her teaching programme presented in a systematic way and detailed programmes were drawn up and published in the Newsletters.

Fund raising continued throughout the year with many special dinners and a Sri Lankan variety show. Katina was celebrated on October 18th. A tree was put up inside the house and a robe was offered to Ayya Kheminda. A retreat for the Castlemaine Dhamma Group was held at the Atisha Centre on October 24th to 25th. We saw the old year out and the New Year in with chanting and meditation. The Venerable Santitthito came to Melbourne to participate in the Summer School. He came to Buddhist House and gave us a talk on mindfulness. The December-January newsletter sounded a more cautious note with its caption - 'Moving on – Slowly'. And indeed we were moving on slowly. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the transformation of the church site into a vihara suitable for our needs and wants would cost a lot of money. It was obvious too that the residents in the areas did not want us there.

The Venerable Sayadaw Nyanika Maungaya came to us early in April. So did Ajahn Jagaro. Vesak was celebrated May 5th and 6th. Ayya Kheminda's busy program continued with retreats, talks at Buddhist House and elsewhere, Healesville, Endeavour Hills, Castlemaine. She took part in an ABC televised programme in which representatives of four major faiths, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism discussed aspects of their beliefs – or lack of beliefs? It attracted a lot of viewers and was shown again recently.

1993 was a year of activity, but it was a year of stress and strain. What seemed to be emerging was the realisation that it was going to be difficult, impossible? to create our dream vihara in this particular area. At a meeting on July 11th the treasurer of the B.S.V. gave a detailed account of the society's finances and resources. Then the Chairman of the special Vihara Fund gave an estimate of the cost of the proposed renovations, alterations and additions to the existing church site, the provision of necessary parking areas, etc, etc.

A vote was taken. The majority voted not to proceed with the church project. We asked to be released from our contract. This was agreed to and our deposit refunded. Inevitably there was a feeling of anticlimax.

There had been so much interest and enthusiasm. But a surprise was in store for us. An old proverb says 'As one door closes another door opens.' Just as it seemed that our hopes for a vihara were well and truly dashed, two apparently suitable properties appeared on the market, a synagogue, a plain simple building and the house next door. Some B.S.V. members looked at the properties. It was obvious that these two properties, which were being sold separately, could provide a Dhamma Hall and a dwelling place for visiting or resident teachers. More members looked at the properties and on the morning of Sunday August 8th a meeting was hastily arranged. That morning just before the auction an offer was made for the synagogue and it was accepted. I think that the owners of the building were pleased that it was going to pass on to a group which tried to follow a quiet philosophy of life. An offer for the house was made the following day. That too was accepted. It had all happened very quickly. A meeting of members was called on September 12th to discuss the rapidity of the arrangements that had resulted in the end of one 'moving on' project and the realisation of another.

Two Sri Lankan bhikkhus came to Buddhist House, the Venerable Gingathene Gnamaseeha and the Venerable Neluwe Gnanasantha. At an informal ceremony they and Ayya Kheminda were asked to stay at Buddhist House for the Rains Retreat. Katina was celebrated on November 6th and 7th.

The Venerable Gnanaseeha was the Abbott of Nandana Tapowanay Forest Monastery. He had organised chaplaincy services for some hospitals in Sri Lanka and helped with rural reconstruction and spiritual revival in

villages near his temple. The Venerable Gnanasantha had been in various meditation centres and was at that time at the Nanadan Tapowanaya Monastery.

In September we celebrated Fred Whittle's 91st birthday. Fred's association with the B.S.V. went back a long way. We sat in the library after the talk on Thursday evening September 2nd to partake of a vegan birthday cake and sing Happy Birthday and on the Sunday night we went to the home of John Fairbrass to celebrate with vegan food, cards, presents and good wishes. Later that same month there was a similar celebration of my birthday with birthday cards and gifts on the table in the library. It was little but happy events like these that contributed to what I call the 'inner' life of the B.S.V. – a current of fellowship and friendship.

A special meeting was called on October 3rd to discuss the move from Mary St and related matters. We had a buyer for Mary St, a lady who wished to live there with her family, We were happy to think that people would live there who would care for the house as we had tried to care for it when it was a centre for the teachings of the Buddha. We discussed finances. Fund raising evenings continued. Katina was celebrated November 6th and 7th. Ayya Kheminda left us at the end of November. She went to Wat Buddha Dhamma and from there she returned to the Netherlands where she continued to teach and write books until her death in 1998. We had the Venerable Thanavaro with us for a week. Born in Italy, he was ordained in England, his preceptor being the late Venerable Sadhatissa. His quiet presence and his talks were much appreciated at a time of 'moving on'.

I resigned from the Committee and from the presidency. I had been in office for a long time. It was time to step back and for someone else to step forward. Preparations for the move continued. Furniture, library books (by this time we had quite a large library), Buddha rupas – all had to be packed and moved. We found homes for the temple cats – Blackie (a poor frightened wreck of a cat when he sought refuge at Buddhist House) and Mudu with the soft fur. We thought they would be frightened and ill at ease in new surroundings, so quiet home was found for each cat. The B.S.V. went into Darling Rd with a new committee. The existing committee stood down and a pro tem committee was elected which would hold office until the Annual General Meeting in 1994. All the necessary legal and financial requirements for the sale of one property and the purchase of another having been attended to, the day came – December 11th – when the door of 226 Mary Street was closed and the doors of 71 and 73 Darling Road were opened to usher in a new chapter in the history of the B.S.V.

1994 saw familiar activities and programs in Darling Road but under more spacious conditions. There was more room for members of the Sangha and no longer did we, the lay members sit squashed together, almost on top of one another. Ajahn Jagaro came to help us with the settling in period, accompanied by a Thai bhikkhu Ajahn Liketh from Adelaide. Under their able and confident direction willing hands transformed the two buildings. Some areas were painted, a new carpet put down in the Dhamma Hall, work started on the garden.

Ayya Khema came to Melbourne to attend the Summer School January 15 to 20. She too contributed ideas and suggestions on suitable ways of making best possible use of our new home. Again there were talks and a retreat at Healesville (attendance 70) but the visit was tinged with sadness. Ayya Khema looked well and seemed to have her usual buoyant energy but she said she was growing old and got tired easily. She would have to cut down her travelling times. This would probably be her last visit to Melbourne. She would return to Brisbane where her family lived but would not travel further south. It was her last visit to Melbourne and for some of us it was our last personal contact with her, apart from letters and hearing accounts of her continuing work in Germany until her death in November 1997. Ayya Khema's teaching of the Dhamma made an impact on all who heard her and her influence on Buddhist women was considerable. She set an example of confidence and dedication. Added to that of course was her incisive intelligence and natural resourcefulness.

Ajahn Sumangalo and Ajahn Liketh were with us in February and March. The talks, the meditations, the practical help that they gave meant a lot to us as we settled into our new home. Members of the Society were asked to suggest a name for our new centre. Of the various names that were suggested, the most suitable was Buddhhaloka, and that is how our centre is known.

Fund raising continued. We had to pay off the bank loan and keep up with the cost of initiating alterations and additions at the vihara. A jocular note in the newsletter reminded us 'Well folks, we are still in debt. But all is not lost – the fund raising juggernaut rolls on. Open your wallets and loosen your belts – help the B.S.V sing, dance and eat its way out of debt by attending one of the following...' It sounded like fun and it was. Not only did these events bring in necessary funds. Despite anicca, dukkha and anatta, Buddhists on the whole are happy people and fund raising is another test to their ingenuity and sense of dedication.

Various 'wandering bhikkhus' came to Buddhhaloka, Ajahn Khemmando, Phra Santittho, Phra Tejadhammo. Whether their visits were long or short was irrelevant. We always benefited from their presence. The dedication ceremony of Buddhhaloka took place on Sunday May 29th. Although it was autumn it was as bright and sunny as a summer's day, a gentle breeze stirring the flags and lanterns in the garden. As guests arrived they were presented with a flower, a candle, incense, a programme. Ajahn Brahmavamso gave a talk, on the meaning of

Vesak, then with Ajahn Likith and Ajahn Ian Ariyasake unveiled the name of the centre. This was followed by a puja, pindapatha dana and a community lunch. There were two marquees in the back garden, which helped with the presence of so many people and the catering and serving of food and as always on these occasions the arrangements for the food were accomplished with true hospitality and smiling good nature. Then invited dignitaries arrived. Sangha from Tibetan and Theravada centres were in attendance. We had with us the Reverend Russell from All Saints Church in Darling Road, representatives of the Bahai faith and representatives of local, state and federal government. After a welcome to all present, the Jayamangala was chanted, flowers and candles were put on the shrine in the hall. I gave a short history of the B.S.V. There was an address by Ajahn Brahm, pithy, going right to the heart of things and enlivened with touches of humour. There were more speeches, none of them too long, all congratulatory. I was presented with a plaque for my many years of service to the B.S.V. and Dr Mervyn Mendis received Life Membership in recognition of his devoted service. Afternoon tea was served then we returned to the Meditation Hall for the concluding ceremony. It would be difficult to describe the happiness experienced by so many people on this occasion. This was an historic day. We now had a centre suitable for the presentation of the Teachings of the Buddha, thanks to the efforts of all who had helped to bring this about, including the early pioneers some now dead and gone.

The Venerable Gunaratana from the Washington Vihara in the USA was with us in early July. A Sri Lankan bhikkhu, living in the USA for years, he was well known for his books on meditation and many came to hear him. Another bhikkhu arrived later in the month. The Venerable Pannyavaro, ordained in Thailand, trained in the Mahasi Sayadaw tradition. The Venerable Ratnasiri and the Venerable Kondanna, both from Sri Lanka stayed with us for the Rains Retreat. The Venerable Kondanna, head of the Vipassana Meditation Centre in Moratuwa gave talks and taught meditation. Kathina was celebrated on November 20th. As well as the Venerable Ratnasiri and the Venerable Kondanna there were other bhikkhus in attendance —Venerable Pemassiri and Venerable Sanihindriya from the Glenroy Vihara, Venerable Vijita from the Springvale Vihara and Venerable Sattindriya from Noble Park. There were approximately 200 people in attendance.

1994 was an eventful year for the B.S.V. Much had been accomplished, thanks to visiting or resident sangha and thanks to the lay community who continued to raise funds and look after the house, the hall and the garden. Ajahn Nyanavisuddhi arrived in December, so did the Venerable Divaloka, a Burmese bhikkhu, a teacher of insight meditation, Burmese method, ordained at the age of six, higher ordination at the age of twenty. A special programme was observed on New Year's eve, with a talk by Ajahn Nyanavisuddhi, and a special New Year Forgiveness Ceremony. At midnight there was chanting and meditation to welcome in the New Year.

January 1995. And no Ayya Khema in Melbourne. How often we had welcomed her! She went to Brisbane and stayed with her family. Some of our members went north to see her. The 'Flying Dutchman' bhikkhu the Venerable Olande Ananda arrived. There was a retreat in the countryside in March and another one at Buddhaloka led by Venerable Ananda, assisted by Venerable Divaloka. There were two general meetings on March 26th, one in the morning at which a number of amendments to the constitution were voted on and agreed to. Then the after lunch Annual General Meeting, with reports on the year's work, election of office bearers.

Fund raising continued. There was an enjoyable evening at the Alexander Theatre at Monash University with 'Well Nudiyar' a social satire set in Sri Lanka at the time of the British colonial domination which raised a lot of laughs and another contribution to B.S.V funds. We had visits from several bhikkhus, including the Venerable Dhammavihari and Ajahn Vijaro from New Zealand. The Venerable Divaloka was with us and Ajahn Jagaro arrived at the end of April. Vesak was celebrated May 13th and 14th with talks and meditation, singing or devotional songs and a recitation of Sir Edward Arnold's long and beautiful poem, 'The Light of Asia', the story of the life of Gautama the Buddha. On the 20th and 21st of May a meditation retreat was held on Phillip Island conducted by the Venerable Mahinda and Sister Sumitra. Venerable Mahinda gave a talk at Buddhaloka. Ajahn Jagaro gave a series of talks covering a wide range of issues in contemporary life. He organised a study group on Saturday afternoons, 3 to 4.30 starting on June 24th.

Some B.S.V. members went to Germany towards the end of June to attend a retreat conducted by Ayya Khema in a Benedictine monastery on the Danube River. By all accounts their journey was well worth while – see the description of the retreat in the August Newsletter.

Ajahn Sumedho came to Buddhaloka in August – a brief visit. He gave us a talk on Grief and Loss, drawing attention to the Middle Way, avoiding the extremes of indulgence and denial. Other bhikkhus came here, including Ajahn Brahm and Ajahn Sumangalo. The Venerable Divaloka was with us giving talks and classes in Abhidhamma. One of our pioneers, Fred Whittle, left us in September. His health had been failing for some time but he bore the pains and indignities of old age with dignity and even an occasional laugh. He died on September 20th. I had known Fred for thirty years. He had made me feel welcome when I joined the B.S.V. He always encouraged newcomers. When I started to meditate he said 'Don't feel concerned if the colour seems to go out of life. It will come back in other ways.' A memorial service was held at Buddhaloka on September 30th. There was a loving-kindness meditation guided by John Gianciosi, formerly Ajahn Jagaro. He had disrobed. In a letter published in the December newsletter he explained his decision. It was a big loss to us. He had been our teacher,

our helper, and our friend. But it was time to move on. Time to say goodbye to Ajahn Jagaro and hello to John Giaciosi, a fellow traveler on the Path.

On the 1st of October another delightfully funny play was presented at the Alexander Theatre - 'The Senator' – set in Sri Lanka at a time when that country was breaking away from colonial domination. There was appreciative laughter as the senator, his family and his friends discussed the situation including the design for a new flag (similar discussions were going on in Australia in 1995 and are still going on).

Katina was celebrated on October 29th. We had with us the Venerable Dipaloka, the Venerable Sumangalo and the Venerable Dhamminda, a Melbourne-born bhikkhu trained in Thailand and Burma, who stayed with us for several months. Other bhikkhus were present at the ceremony, including the Venerable Soma. Again there were two marquees in the back garden.

The B.S.V. became one of the founding members of the Buddhist Council of Victoria. An inaugural meeting was held on November 12th with an impressive array of Buddhist groups in attendance. In 1986 an attempt had been made to establish a Buddhist Council but despite good intentions it had failed though the hope was still there. Now it was anticipated that the Council could attend to several useful functions, that it could 'facilitate inter-Buddhist and inter-faith dialogue, help address concerns of the wider Buddhist community and act as a point of contact, referral, networking and information agency.' (I am quoting from the record in the B.S.V. newsletter.)

In early 1996 we had four bhikkhus with us, each contributing in his own way to the welfare of the B.S.V. – U Dhamminda, U Dipaloka, Venerable Thittinyano and Venerable Nyanavisudhi. There was retreat in March under the guidance of Venerable Thittinyano. Several guest speakers came to us, including Venerable Soma, Sister Upalavanna and Professor de Silva. News came to us of the death of Dayal Abeyasakera on April 29th. He had joined the B.S.V. in 1965, was president for two years and continued to support the society until he moved from Melbourne to Brisbane. A memorial service was held on May 12th.

On May 4th another play was presented at the Alexander Theatre, Prince Siddarta, the story of the early life of Gautama the Buddha, a very successful and enjoyable evening. Vesak was celebrated on May 5th. The Venerable Khemanado was with us in July and the Venerable Dhammavihari arrived to take up residence for the Rains Retreat. Katina was celebrated on October 27th, a large crowd, a truly multicultural gathering.

The first Annual General Meeting of the newly formed Buddhist Council was held at Buddhaloka on November 2nd. Representatives of many of the constituent groups were there, including four members of the Sangha as well as our resident bhikkhu, the Venerable Dhammavihari. The Venerable Nyanavissudhi arrived on December 3rd to spend two months with us. A retreat under his guidance was held in January 1997. The Venerable U Jotika came to Buddhaloka in January and was with us for four months. In his teaching, he always pointed out the importance of mindfulness in thought, words and deeds in every day life. A retreat was held in May under his guidance.

A Future Directions Information Meeting was held at Buddhaloka on March 23rd. This was to consider the presentation by the Future Directions Sub Committee of proposals for the possible future development of the B.S.V. Various options came up for consideration. The Annual General Meeting was held on April 6th There was another successful performance of the play, Prince Siddharta. Ajahn Brahmavamsa came to us on May 21st, accompanied by Venerable Nissarano, formerly John Sauzier, a lay member of the B.S.V. We were very happy to have Ajahn Brahm with us again and the Venerable Nissarano received a warm welcome too. He had been a dedicated and helpful member of the B.S.V. and we all wished him well in his new life in the Sangha. Vesak was celebrated on May 25th with a large appreciative attendance.

The Venerable Hiselle Ratanaseeha arrived on June 1st to stay with us for 6 months. He had spent six years in the USA giving Dhamma teachings and guidance in meditation. He was currently the Abbott of the Sri Dhammaratana Buddhist Centre in Naivala Veyangoda.

From August to October an introductory course –Exploring Buddhist Psychology – conducted by Professor de Silva was held at Buddhaloka on Saturday afternoons. This was not a theoretical course but drew attention to the impact of understanding on practice and the impact of practice on understanding.

Katina was celebrated on November 2nd. We were saddened to hear of Ayya Khema's death on that same date. Her way of teaching from that first talk on the Four Worldly Winds in Buddhist House in Richmond years ago had left its imprint on many members of the B.S.V. She was highly regarded as a teacher, counselor, and friend. A memorial service was held on November 9th.

Throughout the year we had guest speakers from time to time. On one occasion- on December 16th our guest speaker was Dr Thynn Then, author of Living Meditation Living Insight. We were interested to hear of the Sae Taw Win Dhamma Centre in Dr Thynn's home in Sebastapol, California and plans to create a centre to accommodate practitioners who would like to lead a lay ascetic life and devote themselves to study and practice, overcoming the difficulties of establishing a monastic tradition in California and avoiding gender issues and biases.

The Venerable Ratanaseeha left us on February 2nd and returned to Sri Lanka. The Venerable Ariyasilo was with us for four months. His talks on mindfulness attracted many. The Venerable Henepola Gunaratna, a well known teacher and author came to Buddhaloka in April and a retreat was held April 17 to 20.

Some B.S.V. members joined pilgrimages to Buddhist historical sites in 1998 and accounts of their experiences appeared in the B.S.V. newsletter. The Venerable Sujiva was with us for a short visit in April. And the usual A.G.M. was held in that month – on the 25th.

A meditation retreat under the guidance of the Venerable U Jotika was held from May 15th to the 31st. Vesak was celebrated on May 10th and the celebrations were extended to May 16th when there was an evening of devotional song Buktee Geeta. In June there was a series of talks by Professor de Silva on the Satipatthana Sutta. The Venerable U Jotika left us in June. We were reluctant to see him go but it seemed likely that he would return. The Venerable Rubukkulle Rakkhita who had recently been the administrator of the Island hermitage in Sri Lanka accepted our invitation to stay at Buddhaloka for the Rains Retreat. On August 29th there was another successful performance of a play at the Alexander Theatre. This was Wataya Kathawa the Sinhalese version of Bertolt Brecht's famous play The Caucasian Chalk Circle. A synopsis in English was provided for the non-Singalese speakers.

Ajahn Brahmavamso came to Melbourne October 17th and 18th for the official opening ceremony of Sanghaloka, a recently established hermitage at Olinda in the hills outside of Melbourne.

Kathina was celebrated on November 1st. From 8.30 to 9.30 there was silent meditation, from 9.30 to 10.30 a Dhamma talk by Venerable Rakkhita, from 11 to 12 offering of food, from 1.00 to 1.30 the formal Kathina ceremony, including the offering of the Kathina robe. From 2.00 till 3.00 a Dhamma talk by Venerable Vajiro, 3 to 3.30 Transfer of Merit, 4.00 Tea and close.

News reached us of Ayya Kheminda's death on November 11th. She had contributed much to the B.S.V. when she was with us in 1992. I knew from letters received that there were health problems but not that they were life threatening. An obituary appeared in the March newsletter.

In mid- November the B.S.V. received a visit from a well-known Thai teacher Tan Ajahn Anan. With him were Ajahn Sim Chai and Ajahn Kalyano, two senior bhikkhus from Wat Marp Jun in Rayung province south of Bangkok. Two other bhikkhus were also present at most for the teaching sessions, Tan Nivat and Tan Acalo, but they were accommodated at Wat Dhammarangsee in Forest Hill. It was a busy week and a memorable one for all concerned with talks, questions, answers, sometimes going late into the night. Their presence attracted many to Buddhaloka. Then the regular programme resumed and Venerable Rakkhita's presence continued to attract many with his teaching and guidance in meditation.

The B.S.V. was well established at Buddhaloka. As a city centre it was functioning very well. We could accommodate resident and visiting bhikkhus. The various additions and renovations had made conditions more suitable. The library which years ago had fitted into a small bookcase was now an extensive library thanks to donations and eclectic purchasing.

Additions to the library with brief reviews were listed in the newsletter. This was published regularly giving news of past events, plans for future programmes and articles on Buddhism. There had been several editors over the year with an occasional change in format. There were Dhamma classes for children with dedicated teachers who knew the importance of suitable presentation of Dhamma for young people.

The garden had been replanted. There was now a garden pool – the Founders' Pond. There is something special about the presence of water in a garden and this pool achieved that feeling.

But the B.S.V was not content to rest upon its laurels. There were still ideas abounding as to the best ways of maintaining and presenting the Buddha-Dhamma.

Towards the end of the year a property which had been used as a retreat centre in Healesville came up for sale. This was of interest to the B.S.V. as members had often discussed the possibility of such a venture. But it

remained a passing interest. A special meeting was called on Sunday December 6th and the possibility of such a venture was discussed. Conditions did not seem favourable for the B.S.V. to make an offer for that particular property – there was a lot of discussion on the pros and cons of purchasing a country property. On a show of hands it seemed that a small majority would view such a project favourably but it seemed also from the discussion that a further exchange of ideas would be beneficial.

So 1998 came to an end with the Venerable Rakkhita in residence, many attending his talks and his guidance in meditation and a meditation retreat being planned for January, a good start to 1999.

The usual programme continued with Dhamma talks, meditation, and study group, Dhamma classes for children, the celebration of traditional ceremonies.

In 1999 I was awarded the Order of Australia for my services to Buddhism. This was a source of happiness to me. Not because the Order came to me but because I saw it as a sign that Buddhism was given recognition as a part of life in Australia. On Saturday July 17th a special celebratory afternoon was held at the Vihara. It was an afternoon to celebrate the work of founding members of the B.S.V. Tribute was paid to all who had supported the B.S.V. in its early days. Long established members had the opportunity to reminisce on the past and new comers heard of the ups and downs of early days. Tribute was paid to Beatrice who had been treasurer for many years and to me for my years of service. In my response I spoke of the very early founders who had done so much. It was a happy afternoon with many laughs as we looked back on the vicissitudes and triumphs of the past.

I think it is time for me to bring these recollections to an end. I leave it to a younger generation to trace the history of the B.S.V from 1999 onwards. I hope that I have said enough to give some idea of the life of the B.S.V. – the outer life, which is busy, practical, purposeful, happy. Yes, happy. Buddhists are not stiff starchy people. We can – and do – have fun. As for the inner life of lay people- how does this function? I think it is supported by the two pillars of Buddhism – Wisdom and Compassion. Not that many of us could claim to be wise, nor do we always practise compassion. But the beginnings are there and the sustenance is there. Do we always agree? Of course not. With so many different backgrounds, cultures, views, opinions, how could that be? The resolution may take place in quiet – or lively – discussion, or in silence, Noble Silence, which is different from conventional silence, because it is not into denial.

As for the many teachers who have come to the B.S.V. what would we have done without them? I think I have mentioned the names of all who have come here except perhaps when it was for a very short visit. They have come to us from different countries, different climates, different cultures to hold aloft the Lamp of the Dhamma so that it may shine brightly in Australia and these recollections are a tribute to them.

It is a tribute also to lay members of the B.S.V who have looked after visiting teachers, attended to the care and maintenance of the Vihara and given generous financial support. So many of them it would be difficult to compile a list – though names do pop up now and then, especially in accounts of the early days.

I would like to thank those who when they heard I had started to write encouraged me to continue and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my daughter, Christina Bell, for her help in the printing and publishing of this brief history.

If there are any errors or omissions I apologise.

If there is any merit in publishing this little book may it be shared among all beings.

THE END