

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MAITREYA HOUSE AND THE CRYSTAL GROUP

Introduction

This short overview is to give the reader an insight in the history behind and the creation of Maitreya House as a place for the study and practice of the Dharma.

Let's start in:

1962: The Ven. Namgyal Rinpoche, then known as Ananda Bodhi, came from Burma to become the resident teacher at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, London.

1960s : Ananda Bodhi and his students bought Bidulph Hall, near Manchester as a study and retreat centre. They then sold this and bought a more remote property, Jonstone House near Eskdalemuir in Scotland. It was during this period that the Crystal Group was formed as the organising body for the activities around Ananda Bodhi, in Britain.

In the late 60s Ananda Bodhi and over 100 students visited the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa in Sikkim. Ananda Bodhi was immediately recognised as a fully awakened teacher and reincarnation of a line of Tibetan Buddhist teachers. From this time Ananda Bodhi became known as the Venerable Namgyal Rinpoché.

Rinpoché returned to Canada, his home country, in 1965, and it was decided to donate Johnstone House to some young Tibetan lamas who had come to Britain, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoché, Akong Rinpoché and Chime Rinpoché. Johnstone House is now known as Samye Ling.

1970s : The Crystal Group invited Rinpoché to teach in many different locations, including Ros Langdon's flat in London, her house in the Forest of Dean, and the Hampstead Friends' Meeting House. At other times the members of the group met for retreats and study periods in members houses, and held a particularly memorable 10 day Christmas and New Year retreat at the 3 Year Retreat Centre near Samye Ling.

1980s and into the 1990s : The Crystal Group was supported by membership fees, but received most of its income from the donations of Barry Goulden, a very early student of Rinpoché, and a contemporary of Sonam, who had gone to Canada with Rinpoché in 1965. Barry later came back to England, supported his parents, worked as a vet, and gave large monthly donations to the Crystal Group.

It was decided to spend some of the CG's money on building a 60-foot narrow boat, the Crystal Arc. A beautiful boat, and interesting project. Tarchin brought students

from New Zealand and toured England and Wales on it. However it was never much used by the CG, and needed major annual maintenance, and was therefore sold.

Between 1984 and 1987 the CG decided to use some of its funds to sponsor and grant aid Leroy Martin and Martin Loxton, to attend the 1st Academy at Kinmount, Canada.

In 1988/89 Rinpoché encouraged the group to make use of their money, and directed students towards buying a property in southern Ireland. And so Glengeal was found, bought, upgraded and expanded, with a great deal of work from Peter and Melanie Glass, Fran Robinson, Sheila Lister, Bryan Greene, Martin Loxton and many others. Because we had the house, Rinpoché taught many retreats there. Ironically however, students always preferred to be accommodated in the additional houses we rented in the area when there were courses, rather than stay at Glengeal. They were more comfortable. Maintaining the property became increasingly onerous at such a distance, and Ludger Müller and others from Germany and Switzerland took over the care of the centre, with Fran's tireless help.

In 1997 Namgyal Rinpoche was invited by the Crystal Group to come and teach again in the UK. Through the connection with Fran Robinson The Orchard was made available for him. Since then, until his passing in 2003, Rinpoche has been teaching at The Orchard on a yearly basis. It was on his suggestion that the Crystal Group started looking for premises close to The Orchard. When Rose Cottage came on the market it presented the ideal location for that purpose. Glengeal had proven to be unsuitable for long winter retreats and was only used once a year for Rinpoche's visits. With the agreement of Rinpoche and the Crystal Group members from the UK, Switzerland and Germany, Glengeal was sold to free the capital for the purchase of Rose Cottage. Glengeal was bought for £ 24,000IR. A lot was done to it, including building a magical meditation hall and it sold for nearly £100,000IR. Together with the funds still available from the estate of Barry Goulden, a loan from Sonia and donations from Sonia's and Ad's students, Rose Cottage could be bought and renovated to its present standard.

On his last visit to the UK and a few weeks before his passing, Rinpoche blessed Rose Cottage by giving the empowerment of Maitreya Buddha at the cottage and renamed it Maitreya House.

By telling this story I hope it becomes clear that Maitreya House is not a new venture, but the newest venture in a lineage of adventures. There are members of the Crystal group who have travelled that journey since the early 1970s, for example Ros. Some of you will have known and loved Margaret Morris and Joan Ellis, who studied with Rinpoché before he went back to Canada in 1965. Some have met Sonam.

Maitreya House is one of the forms the Crystal Group has taken and it will surely change again. But the Crystal Group and Maitreya House are not separate. Both carry forward the blessing of the great Teacher, who was the inspiration for both.

Martin Loxton, December 2006