

## Chapter 4: Notes & References

I have used the term *stupa* throughout the book for simplicity's sake. The Tibetan word is *chorten*.

The walk with Ven. Anando (then a junior monk and so referred to as Ven.) and Ajahn Sumedho down through the Pennines in the UK was in early summer 1986. We started at Harnham Monastery in mid Northumberland where Ven. Anando was then the senior monk and finished at Malham in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. I avoided the busy Pennine Way long distance path, instead taking us through my favourite parts of the Pennines, including Upper Teesdale, Eden Valley, and Malham Tarn, which were all in glorious flower. By then I had learned that Ajahn Sumedho really liked wild flowers.

Doing a walk with Ajahn Sumedho was suggested by Ven. Anando who I'd walked with the previous year, also at his suggestion, from Harnham Monastery to Manjushri Tibetan Centre in the southern Lake District. That in turn followed the three month walk I undertook with Ajahn Amaro (then also 'Ven.')

in 1983 from Chithurst Monastery in Sussex to Harnham which is described in his book *Tudong: The Long Road North*, Bhikkhu Amaro, Chithurst Monastery, 1984 (new edition available for download at: <http://www.amaravati.org/dhamma-books/tudong-the-long-road-north/>).

This was the beginning of the Theravada Buddhist monks going on *tudong* in the UK. At the start they went with a layman who could carry money and food. It was simply time and place that led to my involvement. Ajahn Viradhammo, who was the previous senior monk at Harnham and knew I liked walking, asked me to accompany him on the first such walk in early summer 1982. We started from upper Allendale where he had been teaching a ten day retreat I had attended and we wandered across Northumberland, including over the Cheviot Hills beside the Scottish border, and finished by crossing at low tide to Holy Island off the northern coast. He then suggested I accompany Ajahn Amaro the next year walking from Chithurst to Harnham, and so it went on. I had become the chap to go on walks with. These days the monks have learnt they don't need a layman and usually set off alone or with another monk, as they would in Thailand, and collect food each day by standing with their bowls in the towns they pass through.

Ven. Anando wanted to share this new experience of *tudong* in the West with his teacher, Ajahn Sumedo. It was he who arranged for a lay supporter to buy the walking boots that were too small. They were the largest available in the UK. He obtained a larger pair from the US for Ajahn Sumedho's walk the next year, 1987, with Ajahn

Amaro and me. Ajahn Amaro's account of this walk is the chapter titled 'Inner Landscapes' in his book *Silent Rain: Talks and Travels* (Amaro Bhikkhu, Sanghapala Foundation, San Francisco 1996) which also includes some of the chapters from *Tudong: The Long Road North*. A digital edition of the book is available for download:

[www.amaravati.org/dhamma-books/silent-rain-talks-travels/](http://www.amaravati.org/dhamma-books/silent-rain-talks-travels/)

Ajahn Sumedho had the problem with boots because of a swollen foot caused by a lymphatic infection caught in Thailand. His feet were already very large so his swollen one was massive. Ajahn Sumedho would often tell the story of how that infection, in a cut he got walking over coral when living on a small Island in south Thailand, led him to abandon his attempt to run away from his duties to teach the young Western monks at Ajahn Chah's monastery (and also to meet his first disciple, Ven. Anando, in the local hospital). Ajahn Sumedho walked with a slight rolling gait because of it and he'd twisted it painfully several times, as he did on our walk through the Pyrenees mentioned in chapter 5. But he would always point out that it was thanks to the foot that he took on a life of teaching and setting up monasteries, for which he was thankful. Many doctors and therapists tried to cure it for him, but nothing ever worked. Then, when I visited him in Thailand, just after he had retired, his teaching responsibilities over, he told me a Thai doctor had just succeeded and that the swelling had finally gone.

For more information on Pema Riksal Rinpoche and his monastery, Namkha Khyung Dzong, in Yalbang, Humla, see: [www.namkhyung.org](http://www.namkhyung.org)

Refs:

*To A Mountain in Tibet*, Colin Thubron, Chatto and Windus, London, 2011.