This year the actual day of Ramanavami, the birth of Lord Rama, fell on Friday 15th April. That day beautiful new outfits were offered to Their Lordships on the shrine. Morning celebrations included informative presentations by Gaur Gopal das and Vraja Bihari das, who opened the treasure trove of the epic Ramayan, describing both historic and symbolic meanings.

After the abhiseka (ceremonial bathing) of Lord Rama, community and ashram devotees joined forces in central Watford to perform jubilant harinama, and many books and prasad sweets were distributed.

Hertsmere Borough Council Planning Committee have unanimously given consent for an exciting new community facility at Bhaktivedanta Manor, the Shree Krishna Haveli.

The Temple applied to build a two storey building as well as relocating the existing poly tunnels, greenhouses and playground.

Managing Director Gauri das said: “We are exceptionally pleased to receive planning permission. Over many years of work including the development of a planning ...continued on page 9
By Zayani Bhatt

As part of ISKCON’s 50th year celebrations, devotees from Bhaktivedanta Manor, academics from around the country and students from Bath Spa University gathered there on Saturday 23rd April to talk about their shared interest in the Hare Krishna movement. The day, organised in collaboration with Religions, Philosophies and Ethics at the University, was dedicated to talks, presentations and a panel discussion on the history of ISKCON including its greatest achievements and challenges, its position within the British Hindu community and the potential challenges it may experience going forward.

The academics included Dr Dermott Killingley of Newcastle and Professor Kim Knott of Lancaster University, both of whom have extensively studied the Holy Scriptures such as the Bhagavat Gita, and the theology of Srila Prabhupada’s movement.

Professor Kim Knott spoke openly and positively about ISKCON’s development within the UK: from engagement with the Beatles to enter the awareness of the public, to the arduous struggle with local government over planning permission. Dr Killingley, one of the country’s best Sanskrit speakers and a senior associate researcher at University of Oxford’s Centre for Hindu Studies, spoke at length about the history of ISKCON within the Vaishnava tradition.

Rasamandala Das gave a presentation on the education ISKCON provides and the aims of this, including further propagation of Krishna Consciousness. The academics, Gauri Das, Rasamandala Das and Dr Suzanne Newcombe, a research officer at INFORM (Information Network on Religious Movements) had a panel discussion about their first encounter with ISCKON, whether it can be considered a cult and the future challenges ISKCON might face.

The essence of the day as explained by Devaki Dasi, the ISKCON 50 UK National Coordinator was that “there were people from all walks of life and every one of them was interested in the movement.” Ultimately for the devotees, it was a learning experience. In the words of His Grace Vrjna Bihari das Brahmachari, “Often when we are spiritual, we miss the world around us. By engaging with academics, we have the opportunity to see how far we have come and improve.”
Celebrating Lord Rama’s Appearance

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The huge public festival on the following Sunday was blessed with sunshine and evidence of the good weather was evidenced by the smile on everyone’s faces.

The festive Radha Krishna deities, arriving at the colourfully decorated lake after being on parade, were carried ceremoniously on a swan boat which was covered in red, pink and white flowers. Meanwhile, children ran around the estate carrying bows and other toys, courtesy of the Spring Fair organised by the Manor School.

Many Members of Parliament, local Councillors and Mayors also took part in the festivities and were very impressed with the community work of Bhaktivedanta Manor. The highlight of stage program in the marquee was the Bhaktivedanta Players’ performance of The Ramayan, which was enjoyed by children and adults alike.
This year’s Gaura Purnima Festival, which celebrates with great pomp the birth of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the incarnation of Krishna for the Kali-yuga known as the Golden Avatar, boasted several special features.

Right from the early hours of the morning devotees raised their arms in surrender, sang and listened to glorifications of the Golden Avatar. Later that morning Manor devotees climbed aboard buses destined for Central London’s harinam procession. The evening program that day was held in a beautifully decorated marquee on Bhaktivedanta Manor’s grounds.

In the early 1970’s Srila Prabhupada requested devotees from all over the world to come together at Lord Caitanya’s birthplace in Mayapur in joint celebration. Along those same lines this year’s Manor Gaura Purnima festival was jointly celebrated with ISKCON-London devotees. Lord Caitanya’s activities were extolled in the form of storytelling, song and dance and theatrical performances by the ladies ashram and Pandava Sena.
The Krishna Wisdom department at the Manor is continuing to share knowledge of Krishna Consciousness with new seekers and nurturing them throughout their spiritual journey.

Their flagship events include:

Mind Body Soul is held every Wednesday. Guests partake in guided meditation, a thought provoking talk and kirtan.

Soul Expressions is a free once-a-month Saturday kirtan extravaganza with short philosophical intermissions.

Yoga Retreats are day retreats for a healthy, positive lifestyle. They teach how to meditate, practice yoga and be inspired by the wisdom of the Bhagavat-Gita.

The most recent Soul Expressions attracted a huge crowd. The monks rocked it to the point people spontaneously got up to express their joy through dancing! Here are some testimonials from their regulars:

“The monks have supported and encouraged me, and events like Soul Expressions and the Retreats have helped me progress really well in my spiritual life. I feel as though I have a new family!”

– Anna Hallett

“I always enjoy the events here, and everyone is so welcoming, and you never leave hungry!” – Ian Whitaker

For more information about upcoming events and to learn how to get in touch:

http://krishnawisdom.com

email: info@krishnawisdom.com
Virtual Mantra Choir
70’s pop star Jayadeva das (John Richardson) released his studio recordings of a choir singing mantras to celebrate ISKCON’s 50th Anniversary. With 450 singers from over 25 countries, the eclectic blend of choir and eastern music is making a splash among online music enthusiasts. Jayadeva aptly showcased samples from his Caitanya-themed album at the Gaura Purnima festival.
To hear what all the buzz is about, visit www.mantrachoir.com.
Easter Kirtan Mellows
The Easter weekend saw the Manor host fifty hours of kirtan spread out in twelve-hour stints over the four days. The event was organised by Radhika, Sundari, Nadiya, Ananda and Sharanagati, alumni of the Manor School. Visitors revelled in the beautiful melodies and instrumental performances. It seems inevitable that the success of this inaugural event will set a precedent so that it becomes an annual Easter attraction for visitors to the Manor.

Kirtan in Devon
Nearly one hundred people enjoyed a kirtan event at an eco-community in Embercombe, Devon. Devotees, who were invited along with locals were invited to share the Hare Krishna mantra and feed everyone sumptuously.

Glasgow Yoga Show
Devotees were the star attraction at the Glasgow yoga show with their kirtan, pop-up temple, sanctified vegetarian food, face painting and gift shop. Devotees from the Manor made the long trek to the city to take part, and had a wonderful time serving with devotees from the temple in Scotland.
A Decade of Educational Excellence

The Manor celebrated a successful ten years’ of providing the Bhakti Sastri scriptural study course to students. The event took place amongst the awarding of certificates to the class of new 2015 graduates.

In 10 years over, 350 students have studied the Bhakti Sastri, with over 200 graduating with the Bhakti Sastri degree. The course provides a comprehensive understanding of four ancient scriptures: Bhagavad Gita, Nectar of Devotion, Nectar of Instruction and the Sri Isopanisad.

Want to enrol in the next course? Email cvs@krishnatemple.com

UK Festival Rolls On

The ISKCON 50th Anniversary year has inspired many devotees to try something special, none more so than the members of the UK Hare Krishna Festival Team. They have participated in over fifty events such as music parades, stage shows and outdoor festivals.

The most recent events in Swindon and Colchester had a total of over three hundred people attend a programme of bhakti yoga and Hare Krishna meditation. The highlight was a presentation on the extraordinary influence that Prabhupada’s mission has had in improving the lives of people around the world.

12th Anniversary of Vrinda Devi

On the 12th anniversary since Vrinda Devi was installed at the Manor, the murti was given a beautiful new flower dress and displayed on the main shrine. A special feast was also sponsored in her honour. Vrinda Devi is non-different from Tulasi, who represents pure unalloyed devotion to Lord Krishna.
From Buddha to Krishna

Members of the Residential Training program at the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery near Hemel Hempstead delivered a generous donation of over 800 kg of rice and pasta to the Manor’s kitchens.

Celebrating Indian culture at the Home Office

Godruma das and Radha Mohan das delivered a lengthy presentation for Home Office staff on a variety of subjects, including Lord Rama, Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada. Staff member Chandu Rajani organised the event, which was part of the Home Office’s cultural diversity training initiative.

Sharing in the Work Place

When the store manager of Watford’s Apple store discovered that two of her employees were Hare Krishna’s, she encouraged them to organise a special treat for the rest of the staff.

Ekachakra and Varsha Patel organised a special vegetarian meal for 50 fellow members of staff, together with copies of Chant and be Happy and The Higher Taste.

Friendship Across Faiths

Srutidharma das and Douglas Hyams represented Bhaktivedanta Manor at a multi-faith Evening of Friendship at Stanmore and Canons Park Synagogue.

“It was a great evening and the choir was the highlight as well as the warmth everyone extended to us,” said Srutidharma das.
Buckland hall retreat for volunteers 2016 proved once again to be a wonderful success, bringing devotees and volunteers on an intimate personal and self reflective journey in the idyllic stunning rural setting of Brecon Beacons in Wales.

Every morning some devotees took a morning walk with Trivikram Das, while others, chanted by the fire or in the high-ceiling halls that waved intricately through the building. Guru Puja followed, with each devotee offering their respects with flowers to the feet of Srila Prabhupada.

During morning class, all were inspired by the teachings of Vraja Bihari das, who gave us practical tips to address the problems we may face in our spiritual life. He shared beautiful memories of Srila Prabhupada’s compassionate nature, touching our hearts and leaving most of us weary and in awe of his kindness to other souls. Sutapa Das gave a wonderful presentation on ‘Decisions Decisions’ which left all of us tickling with laughter at our very own indecisive decisions when faced with controversial questions.

There was a wonderful selection of afternoon workshops. ‘Raising children for Krishna’ given by Guru Charana Padma dasi, where she shared her own experience of bringing up children in Krishna Consciousness. ‘Dealing with Impersonalism’, by Akhandadhi das lead us through the principles of science to explain the logistics of Krishna Consciousness. ‘Can you be married and spiritually successful?” by Kripamoya das and Guru Charana Padma dasi proved to be extremely popular with a packed audience eager to learn a few tips on how to successfully be married and live a healthy, happy long life in Krishna consciousness.

After a full day of rich spiritual insight, we were all able to wind down to an amazing production of dramas by Bhakta Nandan. The evening was completed with deeply relaxing kirtans, performed by kirtaneers from the Manor.

The profound messages put across throughout each of the wonderful talks and workshops made us all reflect deeply into our spiritual sadhana and how we can treat others better in Krishna consciousness. By the end of the weekend we felt rejuvenated, spiritually charged, and blessed to be in the association of wonderful devotees with opportunities to make long lasting friendships.
Over the past few months, young devotees from the Manor's community have come together to establish a creative arts group: 'Something Spiritual'. They aim to spread Krishna Consciousness through theatre, music, dance and the visual arts. More recently, the group gave a moving performance during the Gaura Purnima festival held at the Manor depicting Lord Chaitanya's pastimes.

Something Spiritual are currently focusing on their next project - their biggest and most ambitious yet, a drama production called 'Prabhupada - Departing For the West'. This 2 hour epic focuses on the journey of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, in celebration of the 50 years of his establishment of ISKCON.

The play takes the audience on a journey of his tremendous determination to introduce Bhakti Yoga to the west, in the face of great adversity. The play pays particular attention to his endearing character and divine qualities that won the hearts of thousands. The audience can take a glimpse into Srila Prabhupada's compassionate yet bold nature which had led to the successful establishment of ISKCON and what continues to keep the movement thriving today.

Dates: Saturday 2nd July 2016, 7.30pm & Sunday 3rd July 2016, 5.30pm
Tickets can be found at: bit.ly/PrabhupadaEpic
For more information feel free to contact us at: somethingspiritual108@gmail.com

SUMMER YOUTH RETREAT SALE ENDS 1ST MAY
SIGN UP: WWW.PSENA.COM/SENAGETAWAY/JOURNEY-HOME
A Life-Changing Experience

Twelve members of the Manor congregation embarked on a three-month adventure in India. Highlights included boat rides along the serene River Ganges, and not only did they witness the beautiful architecture of some of the nation’s most ancient temples, but they also got to experience some time learning about the Eastern tradition with some of the resident monks of those temples.

Upon returning to the UK the travellers participated in a three month residential course at the Manor studying the Bhakti Sastri, ancient philosophical literature from India. The next India trip is in September, and the next Manor residential course is in May.

To see if you could be lucky enough to go next, email ashram@krishnatemple.com.

The Queen's Beacon

Radha Mohan das joined the Deputy Mayor of Hertsmere Cllr Peter Rutledge, Oliver Dowden MP, Counsellors and other locals at a ceremonial beacon lighting to mark the Queen's 90th birthday.

Senior Constables of Hertfordshire

The new Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Mr Andy Bliss and Chief Inspector Tannis Perks appreciated the hospitality they received during their visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor to learn more about the community.

Cleaning for the Queen

Children of the Manor School worked with Hertsmere Borough Council to participate in a nationwide cleaning drive in honour of the Queen's 90th birthday. "Clean for the Queen" engaged school children and members of various communities across the UK.

Equipped with litter pickers, bin bags and tiaras the children enthusiastically filled 10 bags of litter from along the A41 on a 2 mile stretch adjacent to the Manor. “It really made the children aware of the amount of litter dumped by the public and gave them a real passion to work to tackle it!” explained Manor School Head Teacher, Guru Carana Padma dasi.