

Part 348 for Cathy's blog

Monday 27th April, 2026

Temple Day: Banteay Thom

Banteay Thom lies in rice fields, off the Korean Ring Road. It is quite a long ride, both on tarred roads and then on sandy tracks. It is too sandy for our trusty Honda Dream motorbike and I have to walk part of the way.



Eastern gopura in the outer wall.



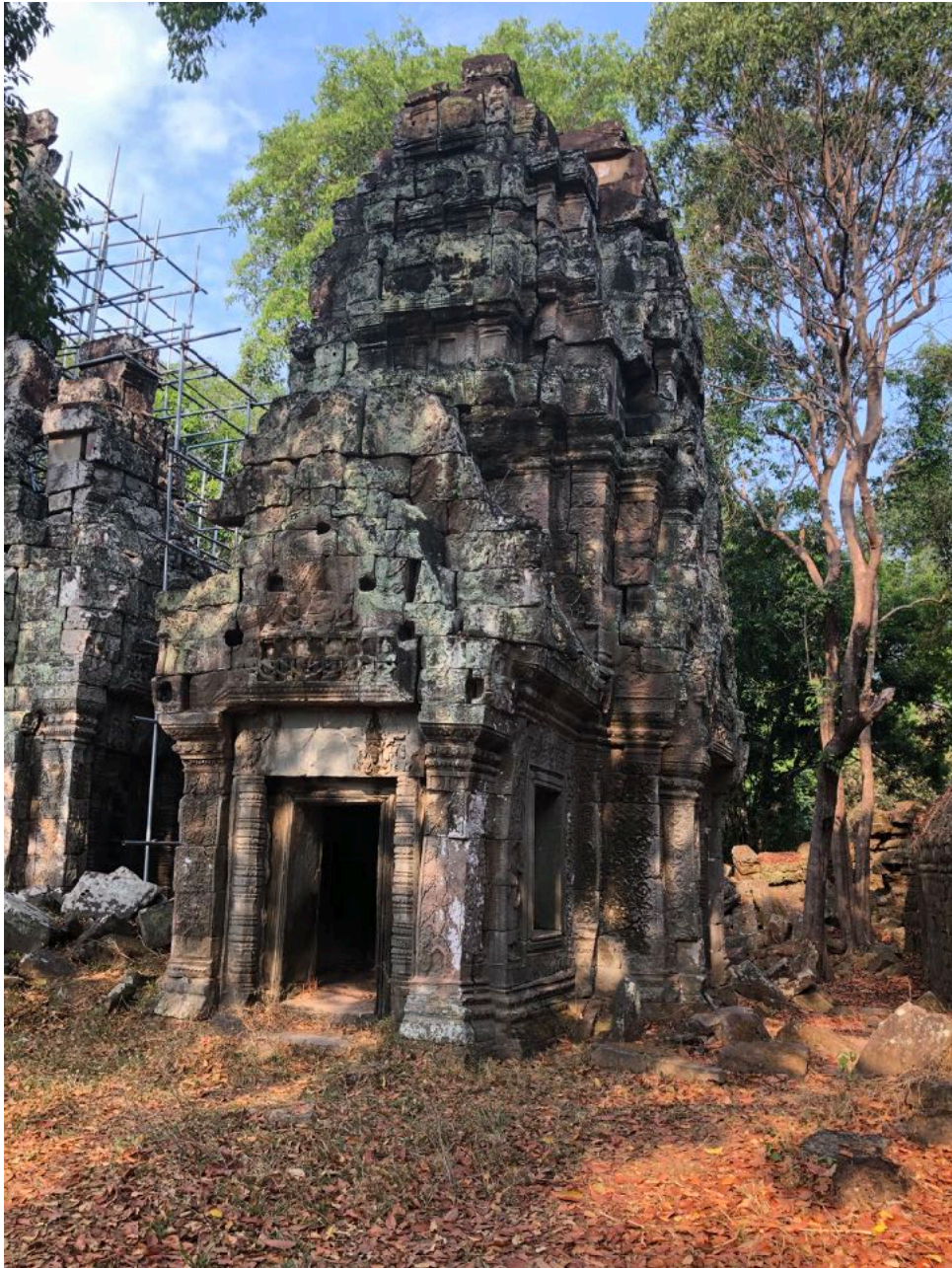
Carvings on the eastern gopura of the inner wall.



Closer view of some of the carvings.



Inside the inner wall, you can see the wall itself has been used as a covered walkway around three sides of the central towers.



One of the towers.



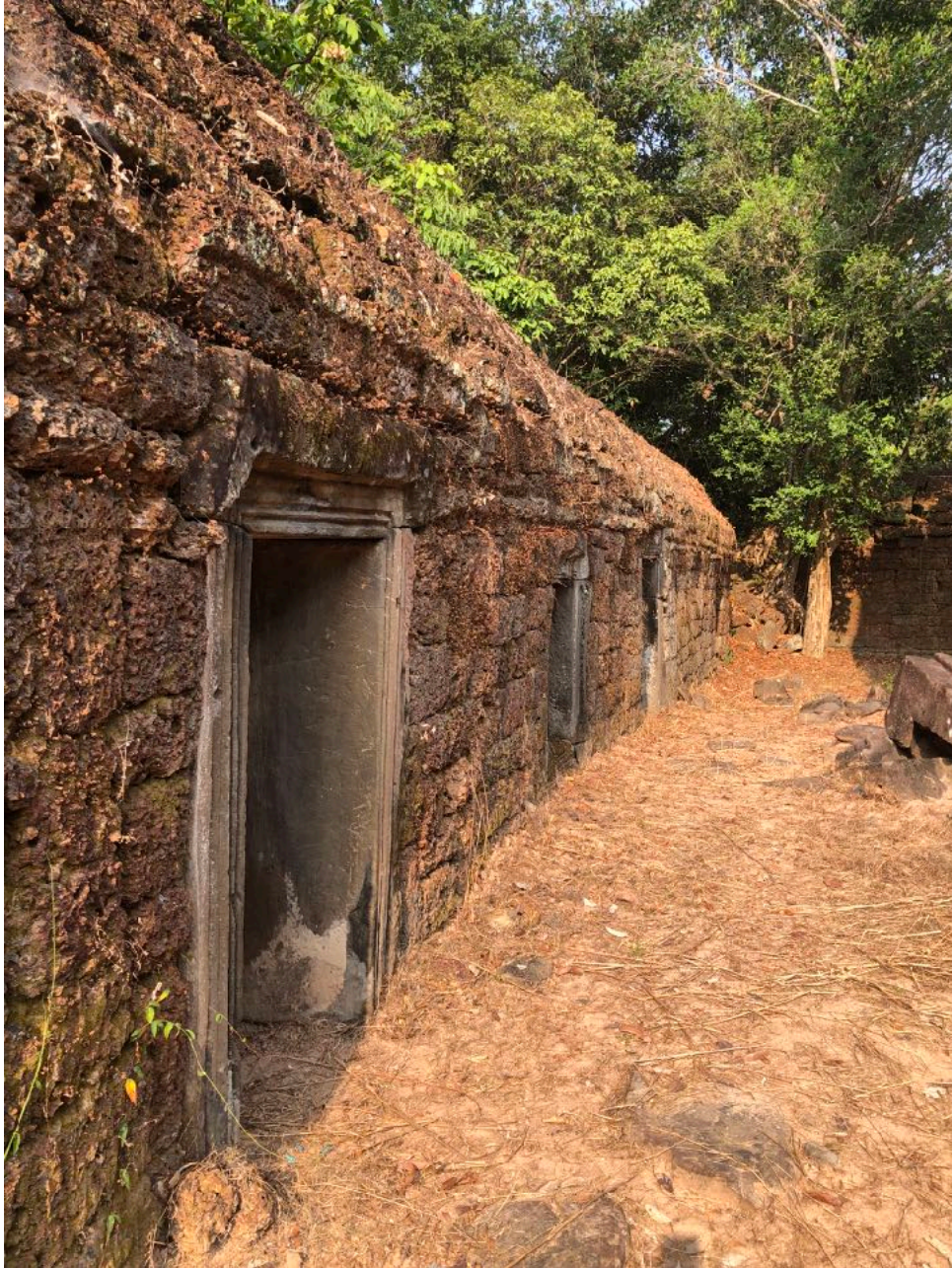
The central tower with a lot of scaffolding at the back (west).



The third tower.



Carving (medallion).



More covered walkways (called galleries).



These figures have different “sompots”... skirts. And someone important is riding a horse. (Reading the Hindu stories is on my “to do” list.)



Pretty carvings on the false door.



Between the inner and outer wall are now dry water basins and some trees. This tree has has thorns for defence.



We saw this cow tearing at the leaves of other trees, then it was time to go home : long ride, over potholed roads (due to the floods last year).



In the afternoon, we went to a briefing for volunteers, at a place that teaches children from poor families. The program sounds good, general education and English language, uniforms, computer access and use. We went because their advertisement asked for volunteers to talk with the students so they could practise their English.

After a briefing about the company and a tour of the grounds, the question was : “What can you do to help us run this program?”

So, coming to lessons and giving students a chance to practise their English has become... write the program, deliver the program and even help train the teachers.

Of the five of us there (Western foreigners) two needed to get their working with children check (before starting on May 2), a third said he wanted to think about it (he was a teacher here in Siem Reap and has just finished a contract, but he is not ready to run an English program) and us.

We have been caught before. You come to an NGO or other group, expecting to “help” in class. Before you know it, you are writing two lessons a week, rewriting the program (which is taken from western resources and is not relevant to Khmer students), making flash cards or games etc, delivering the lessons, going to staff meetings where you help the teachers with ideas etc ...

Not to mention a five page contract and commitment to three months (ok in itself, but in this particular case, it has specific learning outcomes to achieve without having a program written).

We sent them back their advert... “helping students practise their English” ... and said no thank-you.