Part 393 for Cathy's Blog

Monday 5th and Tuesday 6th, October, 2026

Monday 5th
Temple Day : Bayon blocks

Most of the temples, whether large or small, have a "graveyard" of blocks stacked neatly around them. Many have these blocks in well ordered rows or piles.

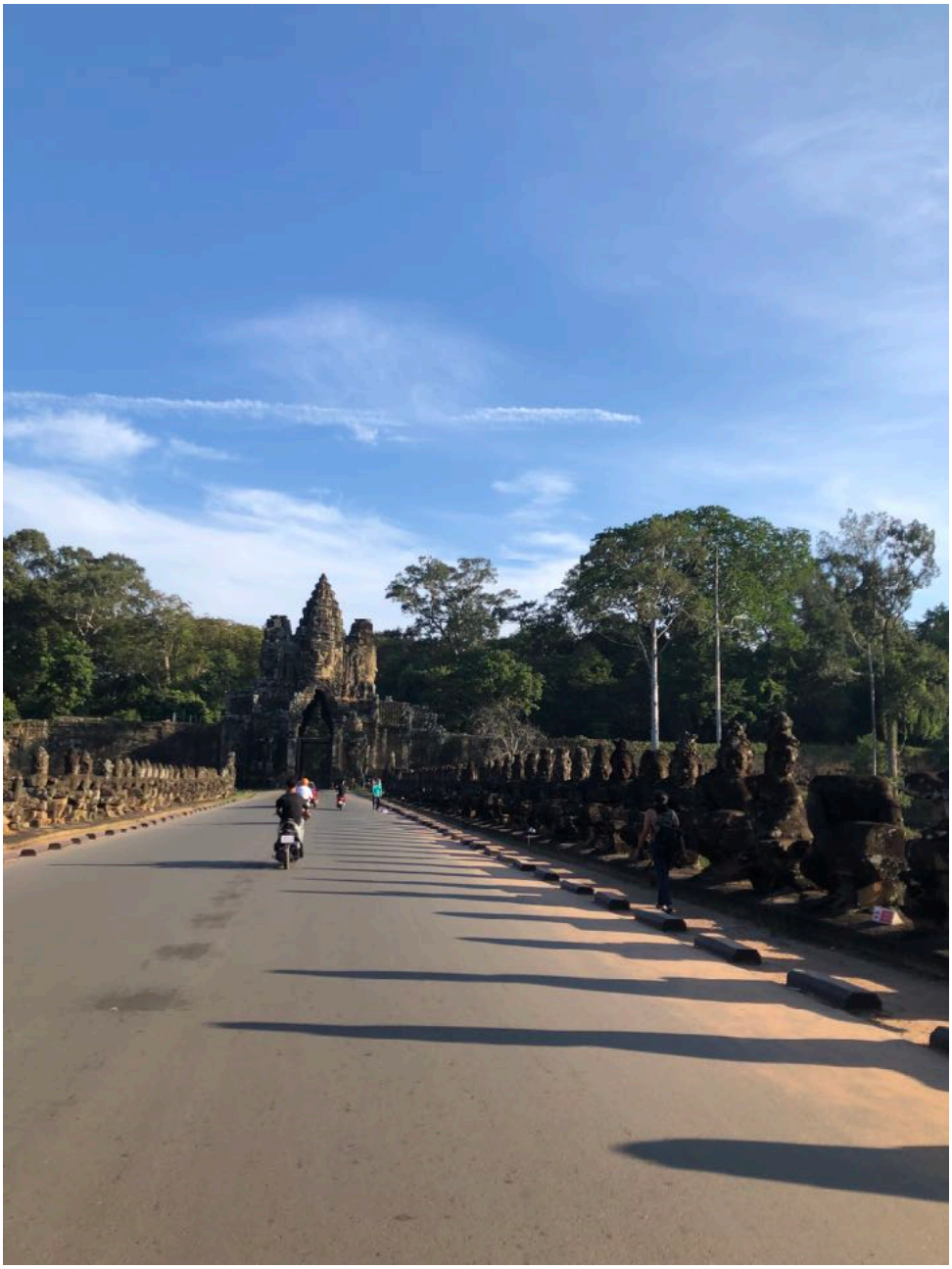
The Bayon is no exception.

As you ride from the iconic South Gate to the Bayon (in the centre of Angkor Thom) you pass some of the blocks from the Bayon.

There is an information hut and a hand operated crane, such as the Angkorian workers used to move the blocks of stone. You can have a go at lifting blocks. There are also many carvings, often broken. There is even one of the faces of King Jayavarman VII, that was once on one of the (smaller) towers of the Bayon.

A second area to the east of the Bayon has even more blocks and carvings.

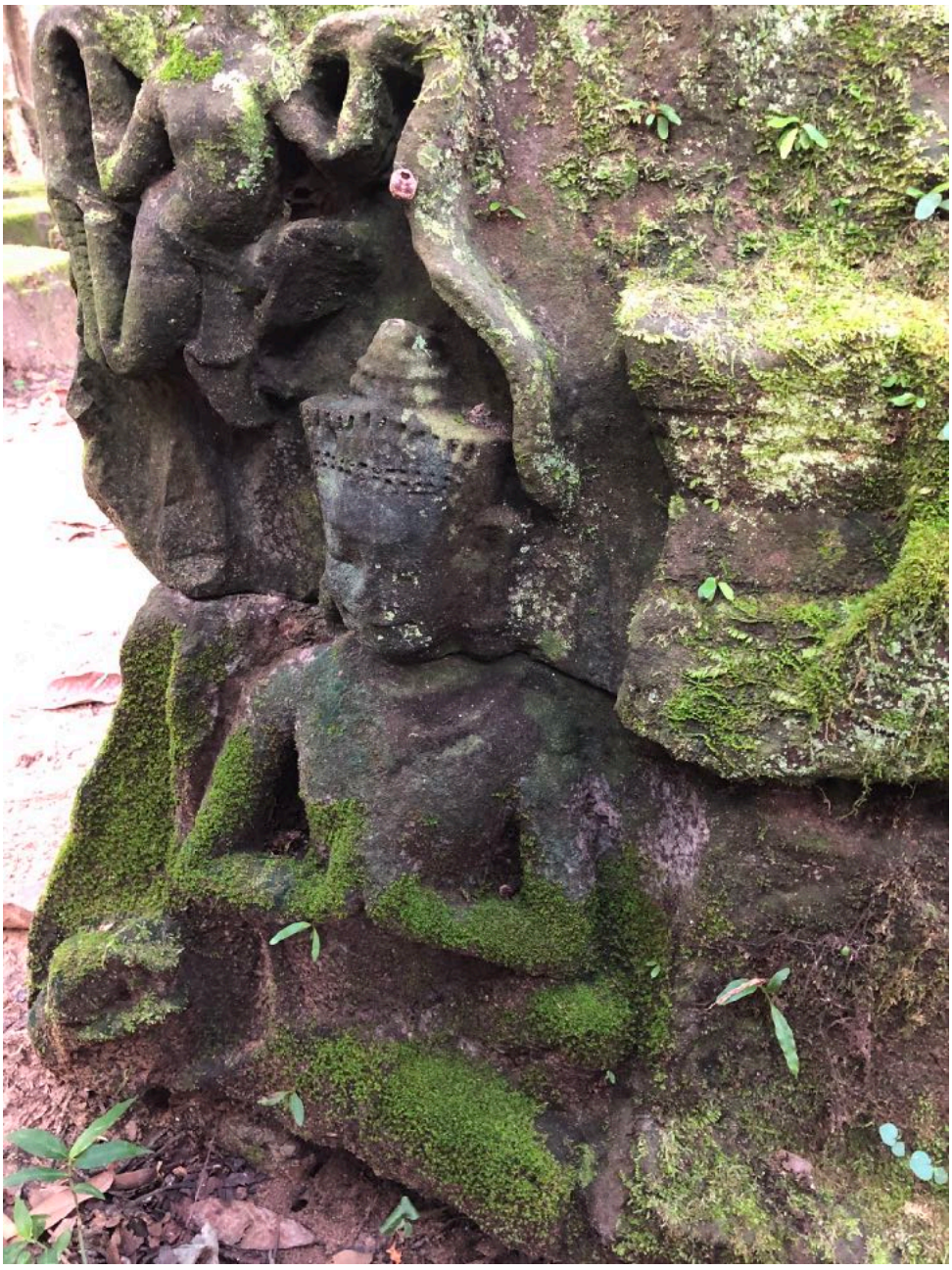
We started on the southern blocks.



The South Gate, Tonle Om, in the morning sunshine.



Carvings like these tell the religious stories. They are above most doorways in temples.



People with three or five or even ten days in Siem Reap don’t have time to view these carvings. I think they are missing out.



Here is part of a lotus. A “lotus” is like a round “hat” that sits above the towers. A large lotus might have seven layers of petals, each circular layer getting smaller as it gets taller. In the Bayon, each tower has the four faces of the King and then the lotus hat. Here, there are people carved into the lotus layer, not petals. We have not seen this before.



On either side of doorways, warriors are carved. Next to the warriors are the Devapalas. Temples and carvings can be dated from the clothing and head dresses of the people in the carvings.



Flowers and leaves. Once again, we have never seen leaves carved like these.

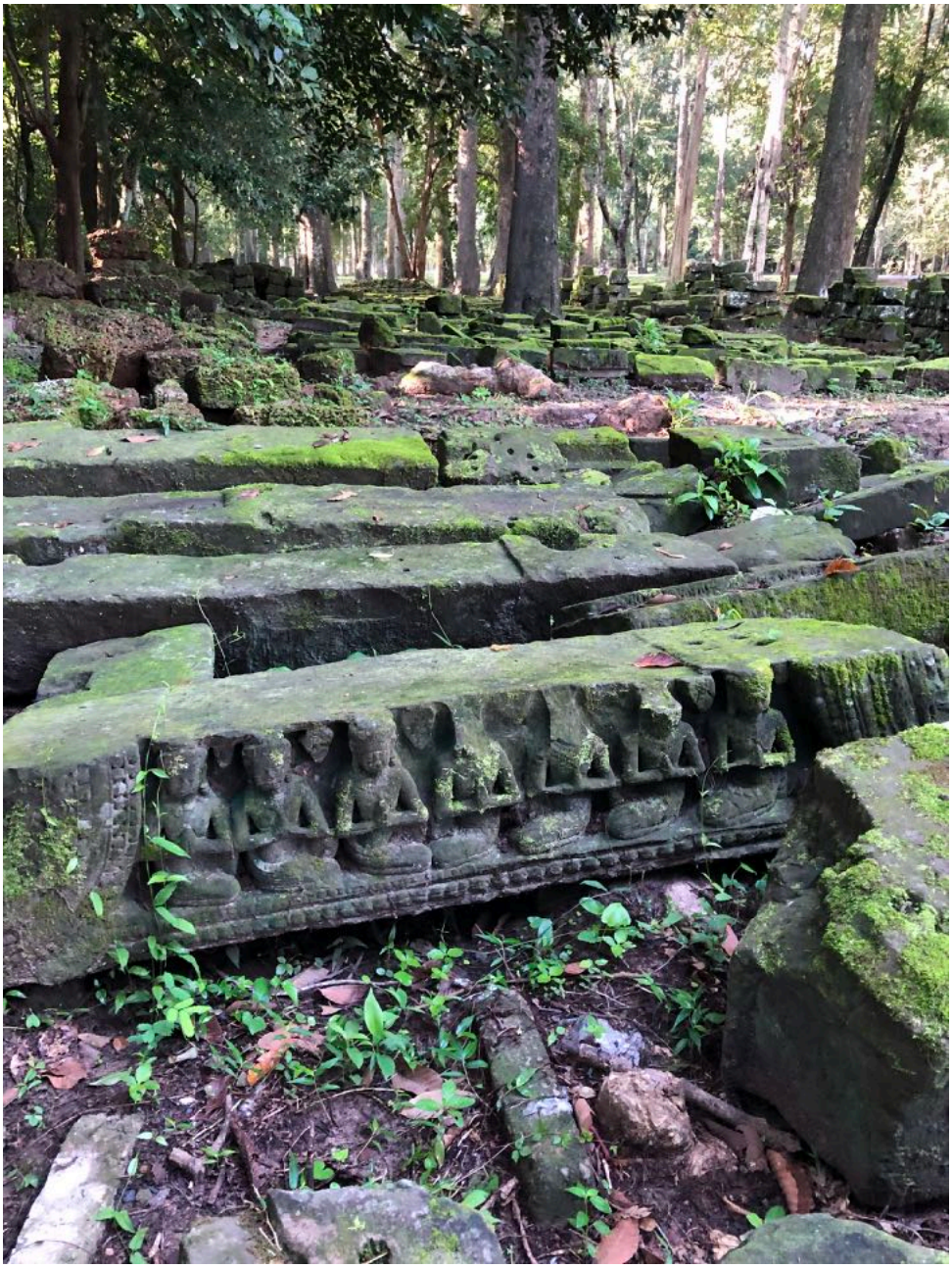
The Bayon was built at the height of the Angkorian Empire. It was built about 230 years before the Empire ended (more of a decline and then a final defeat by the Ayutthaya

Kingdom, from Thailand, some 600 years after the founding of the Khmer Empire).



The Bayon.

These scooter riders have just ridden up from the South Gate.



More carvings and some of the laid out blocks.



A broken statue of a warrior.



Moss contributes to the weathering of the carvings.



It is the height of the wet season.

Water lies along the road sides.



We walked around to the east side of the Bayon and found more hidden carvings.



Rows of these arch shaped carvings were placed along the tops of the outer walls of temples. Usually, the people have been chipped out, mostly due to the change from Hinduism to Buddhism (introduced by King Jayavarman VII in 1181).

Some looting of these carvings took place from the 1880's when the temples were first discovered, and more took place in the 1930's as the temples were first cleared and then even more in the 1960's by Latchford and a fourth wave during and after the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot.



Row of carvings that once stood on a temple wall.



Window columns (mullions).



Pillars.



“Tapestry” carvings, patterns in the stone.



You cannot walk between the rows of blocks. These carvings are partly hidden and partly protected in their new homes, lying row by row to the side of the Bayon.

Tuesday 6th October, 2026.

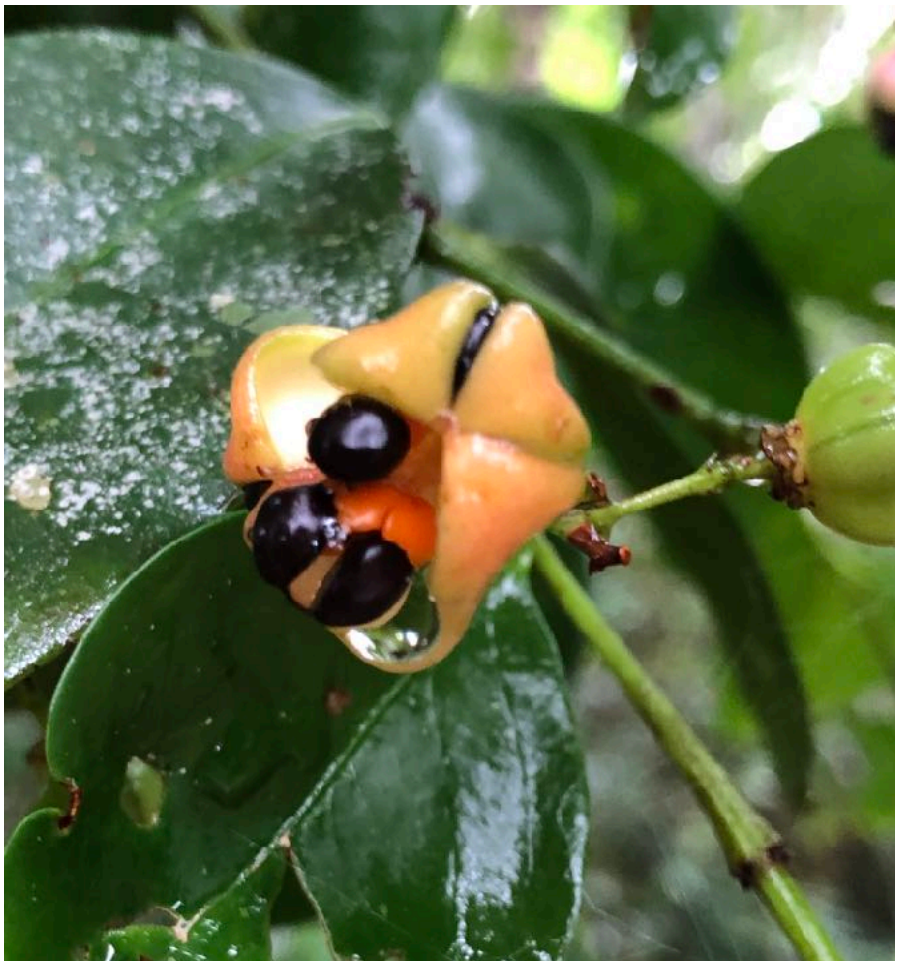
Wall walk: North Gate to NE Prasat Chrung

It was raining at 6:00am, so we dawdled around home until it (nearly) cleared and set off about 8:30am.

The roads are busier this hour and a half later.

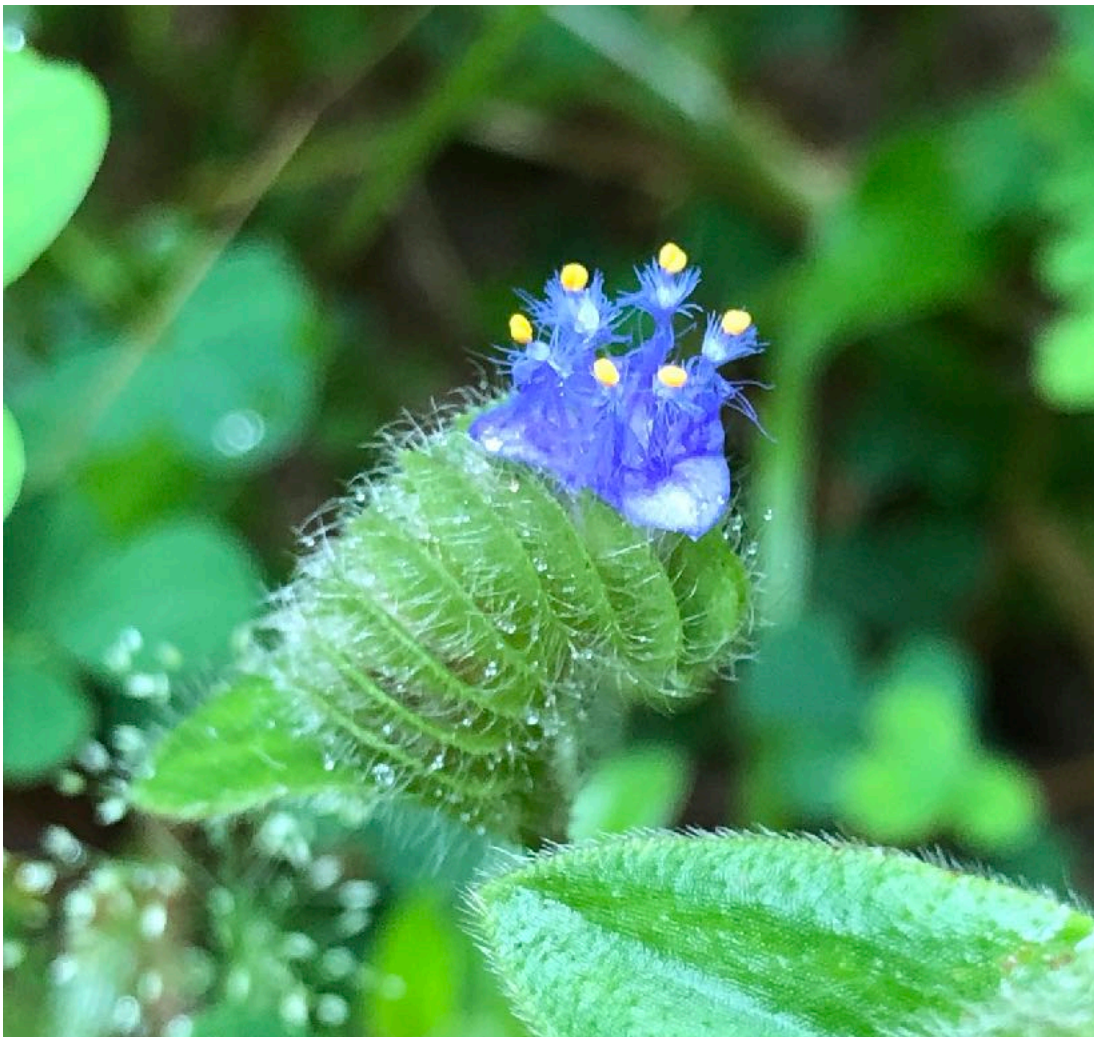
We like the north wall because there are several tree stumps which often have a lot of fungus. This year, despite it being very wet, there has not been much fungi, and today there were not many insects either.

We still get in about 7 000 steps on a wall walk, so it is our exercise and it gets us out of the house.





Pretty toadstools.



Some of the flowers from our walk this morning.





Snail on a tree.



Not sure what this is… perhaps it is a lace-wing.



A spider… missing some legs, I think.



Different spider…

Striped caterpillar.





We found another scorpion hiding under the leaves.



Berries and ants.



We rode back through Angkor Thom to come home (alternatively, you can ride west of Angkor Thom, through a village called Veal and come into Siem Reap from the west). Riding this way takes us past Ta Prohm Temple. They have been working on the south gopura since we came here, more than three years ago.

The structure is now rebuilt and they are working on carving the blocks.

Local Khmer people are celebrating Pchum Ben. “Ben” refers to little balls, in this case, of rice. People walk around the temples (and pagodas) and throw little balls of rice for the hungry spirits.

It is a good time to catch up with family and friends as many businesses and schools have holidays.

Our landlord cooked a yellow curry for us, eaten with bread. We did not eat the congealed chicken blood, but the rest was very good.