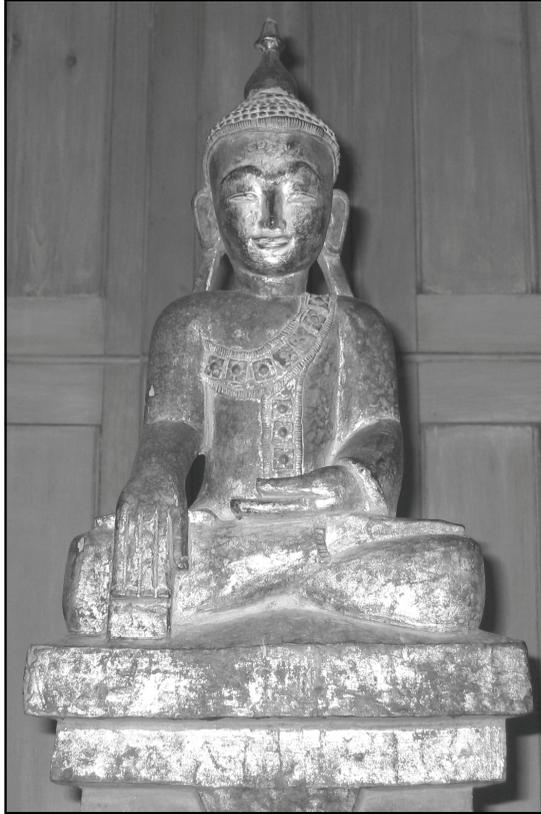


—Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



Portobello Priory Altar Buddha

Calendar of Events

May to August 2008

Portobello Buddhist Priory
27 Brighton Place, Portobello
Edinburgh, EH15 1LL
telephone and fax (0131) 669 9622
email: prior@pbpriory1.freeserve.co.uk
website: www.portobellobuddhist.org.uk

– Welcome to all –

Portobello Buddhist Priory, a ground floor flat in the Portobello district of Edinburgh, opened in 1998. It is one of a handful of temples in Britain which are affiliated to the Community of Buddhist Contemplatives. The training monastery of the Community at Throssel Hole near Hexham in Northumberland was founded in 1972 by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, an Englishwoman who trained within the Soto Zen tradition at one of its main monasteries in Japan. The resident Prior at Portobello is one of the senior monks from Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey.

The purpose of the Priory is to offer lay training within the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (Soto Zen) to anyone who sincerely seeks to undertake it, and the prior's role is to support such training. The prior and members of the congregation are also involved in activities such as religious education, hospital and prison visiting.

All are warmly invited to join in the Priory's programme of lay practice, the purpose of which is to come to know and live from our True Nature, whose expression is our wise and compassionate living.

With kindest wishes from Rev Favian, Prior

(For details of the day-to-day schedule at the Priory, please see back page)

- Weekend events at the Priory -

May 2008

Sunday 4th	Festival of the Buddha's birth	11am
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June

Sunday 15th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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July

Sunday 13th	Festival of Achalanatha Bodhisattva	11am
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Sunday 23rd	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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August

Sunday 10th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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The Priory is open to visitors as well as trainees every day from
6.45am - 9.15pm
except Mondays, Thursday afternoons, and Sunday evenings.

*(Please phone beforehand, and please note when the Prior
is holding retreats elsewhere)*

Newsletter

no.29
April 2008

— Prior's Notes —

'I came to realize clearly that mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars.' -

Great Master Dogen

I was interviewed recently about the response of Buddhism to environmental issues. Besides some guilt about my sloppy recycling habits the interview got me ruminating on this bigger picture.

One of the ways Buddhist awakening is often expressed is in some version of this Dogen quote; the 'not twoness' of existence. When I know and act only from my sense of separation from the world, dukkha tends to result; life appears with a basic sense of dis-ease. Buddhism doesn't deny our individuality, but places this completely in the midst of the flow of existence; the seamless nature of reality.

Instead of truly exploring this truth I often seem to run in the opposite direction, trying desperately to make real to myself, my sense of self! I suspect we can generalise this delusive behaviour to a collective delusion driving our species, keeping us chasing after more and more 'stuff' to fill a sense of vacuum at the core of our being. In this scenario our environment becomes a big larder to be raided endlessly or a resource to be manipulated in the hope of

producing the perfect conditions for our happiness; happiness being short-hand for the endless quest for self-ratification, permanency and security.

Waking up therefore seems to include recognising the futility of attempting to ground ourselves through consumption and accumulation. The sense of our individual sufficiency is co-dependent on the inherent sufficiency of existence itself. Our attempts to ground ourselves in what is true needs this non-dual perspective: with this, Buddhism tells us, comes the possibility of the ending of dukkha.

contd. over /

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(contd. from previous page)

When 'mind' is known to be 'no other than mountains and rivers', the natural movement of compassion and wisdom can flow more freely. We instinctively don't harm our own bodies and in our 'connected' life we don't wilfully pollute and exploit our world.

We have a lovely Buddha statue on the altar at Portobello, an 'earth witness' Buddha with the hand reaching down to touch the earth. There is a clear expression here of waking up to the profound connection we are with all of existence; the ground of our personal life, and the greater body of our being.



Jukai 2008

Two days before Jukai I read on Rev Mugo's blog that (in a certain sense) the first ceremony of the retreat was the journey to the Abbey. As it turned out the journey to Throssel was memorable for me. As I passed through Newcastle and on to Hexham, noticing the changes time had brought, memories came back to me of an earlier part of my life. I had a strong sensation of the impermanence of things and felt sad, lonely, and abandoned.

Not long after I decided to become a Buddhist I started to keep a journal. Near the start is an entry where I've written:

*I want the chance
to change psychologically
to be able to do good*

Of course at that time I did not know the term sange, and would not have thought of using the word contrition, or even the word repentance. However 2007 was Interna-

tional Rumi Year (800 years since the birth of Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi—he and Dogen are contemporaries) and the following lines from the *Mathnawi*, Rumi's best known work, must have caught my eye:

*Though your life has almost passed, this present moment is its root:
if it lacks moisture, water it with repentance.
Give the Living Water to the root of your life,
so that the tree of your life may flourish.
By this Water past mistakes are redeemed.
By this Water last year's poison is made sweet*¹.

Going to Jukai and taking the precepts I realise that for the rest of my days I shall have a great need of kindness, compassion, and mercy—both in giving and in receiving.

I was totally won over by all the thought, love, and care that went into the retreat. I would like to thank Revs Leandra and Galen, Rev Master Daishin, all the monks and lay people, and all my fellow new ordainees, for making Jukai 2008 such a wonderful and happy occasion.

Gary Thomson

¹ Mathnawi V: 2222-2224, Version by Camille and Kabir Helminski
'Rumi: Jewels of Remembrance'
Threshold Books, 1996

A Broken Glass

Long before I had any personal experience of Buddhism I read a story of how Milarepa lived for years as a hermit in a cave on a mountain. His only worldly possession was a pottery jug that he used for fetching water from a spring. One day this jug broke and he got on his knees in gratitude to the broken jug for giving him a lesson in impermanence. I have always remembered this story - I have even clearly remembered Milarepa's

name. The story resonates for me.

A few years ago I was doing the washing up when a glass tumbler fell to the floor and smashed. I swept up the pieces of glass and disposed of them.

Nothing spectacular.... yet I still return to that brief incident and find there is more

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and more that I can learn from it.

There is a drying rack on the right side of my sink and the glass was on the top shelf of this rack. The glass fell. I observed it falling as though in slow motion... it fell in a slight arc and hit the edge of the draining board and it was at this stage that it broke into several pieces. It then bounced off this edge and fell onto the floor where it shattered into dozens and dozens of tiny pieces which scattered over the lino.

I stared at these little pieces and instantly I saw their beauty. I did not make any 'conscious decision' to approach the situation in a positive manner. It was my *instant* response.... I accepted what had happened. I saw these pieces of glass, each unique and sparkling, bringing beauty to the floor of this rather dark corner of my kitchen floor. I saw beauty. I experienced pleasure.

How would my life be if I could instantly respond to whatever occurred in such a positive and joyous way? If I could live my life without all the conditioned responses, the preconceptions, the judgement and the fear? And when I start asking these questions I am aware that once again I am judging myself for not being the way I want to be... rather than accepting who I am and what I am right now.

A few years ago I was doing the washing up when a glass tumbler fell to the floor and smashed.

I still ponder about that moment. I wrote; 'a glass tumbler fell' ... as though I had no part to play in what happened as though..... *the glass just fell.* Although I

now have no clear recollection, I am fairly sure I was trying to put yet another object on the top shelf of the drying rack. My hand might have caught the glass and sent it on its way, drawn by gravity, towards the floor.

Was I washing up in a meditative and conscious manner? I doubt it. For me washing up is a time to listen to the radio, or to let my mind wander... often I do both. So I listen, I think and I do the washing up... it is a wonder I do not break more things.

I swept up the pieces of glass and disposed of them.

I also find myself pondering about those pieces of glass. I cannot now recall if I gathered them up for the glass recycling bin or if I wrapped them up for the bin men. It is so easy for us to think we can *dispose* of things, just by putting them out of our sight. Put them in the bin, hide them in the ground, melt them and use them again, switch off the disturbing news items on the television....

If I put them in the bin then those beautiful pieces of glass will be buried somewhere in a old quarry in the Scottish Borders. There to remain in that form for thousands of year... for who knows how many Kalpas? If I put them in the recycling then they may already be melted and blended in a molten mass of liquid glass and reformed as part of another glass, a bottle, glass fibre insulation.....

Perhaps another glass containing some of this glass will fall to the ground and shatter.....

Nothing is lost.

I usually meditate in the mornings up in my bedroom... a sunny room at the top of the house where I have lots of indoor plants. One morning recently I noticed that one of my cacti was about to flower and decided I would take it downstairs so I could enjoy it in my living room. I placed the cactus pot on the floor by the door, so that I would remember to take it downstairs after meditating. While I was sitting I found my mind was repeatedly returning to planning how I would write this article about the fallen glass for our Priory Newsletter. How would I phrase it? How would I present it? How would I express it? My busy busy monkey

mind...

After sitting, I blew out the candle and stooped down to pick up the cactus pot. I cannot recall exactly what I did.... but the next thing I saw was the cactus and the pot fall sideways and much of the earth from the pot spill over the carpet. My *instant* response was anger and frustration and *then* I remembered all the mental planning I had only just been doing about my acceptance of that broken glass and I consciously chose let go of my anger and frustration, and to laugh!

Julian Goodacre

Jody Higgs *1936-2008*

Congregation members will have been saddened to learn of the death from lymphoma of Jody Higgs on 3rd February.

Although for many years a central figure in the Edinburgh Forest Sangha Group she was also a good friend of the OBC. She visited Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey and attended retreats led by OBC monks in Edinburgh before the establishment of the Portobello Priory. She was present at the opening ceremony of the Priory in January 99.

Her kindness in making her attractive cottage at the foot of Glen Lyon available to our senior monks for retreats was much appreciated, not least by the former head of our Order, Rev. Master Daizui, who corresponded with Jody on the subject of their illness shortly before his death.

Rawdon Goodier, Lay Minister

Throssel for the first time-

On arrival I was met by the Rev Guestmaster who showed me to the room I was to stay in (see below).

Outside in the corridor was a notice board showing the structure of the weekend and a timetable.

The important parts were gone over, and after the evening meal and a quick briefing we were left to ourselves.

On Saturday morning just before 6am a bell rang in the corridor giving us 25mins to get ready for the first of several meditation practices.

After breakfast the day was filled with these practices, both sitting and working. In between times there were talks on Buddhism in general and Serene Reflection Meditation in particular. The patience of the four monks who were there to guide us was immense. Questions ranged from "How do you become a monk?" "Do you know what's going on in the outside world?" to (my favourite) "What is that bib you wear on the top of your robes?"

Apart from the first and last meal, all are

taken in silence. You are expected to maintain this silence as much as possible throughout your stay.

I found this to be beneficial as although you were in a group the quiet made it a very personal experience helping you to get the most from this short stay.

The same format was followed on Sunday with a last talk on how to carry on your practice at home.

What did this weekend achieve for me? Far too much to write in this short piece. No great insight or flash of enlightenment. Just a knowledge that when we bring our practice into everyday life it enhances it greatly. And benefits everyone around us in a positive way.

Who knows, with a fast track attitude and my usual determination I might even be ready to ask to take the Precepts in record time.

Maybe in about six or seven years . . .

. . . . Perhaps maybe.

Ian Rae



Meditation

Over the past years I have made meditation the most important thing in my day, giving me the discipline to have at least one sitting every day. I very seldom consider it a chore. In fact for the most part it is something I look forward to.

Recently I had the misfortune to break both my heels and ended up in hospital for three weeks. Ample time, I thought and friends jested, to give towards meditation. However I found it extremely difficult to do so. For a while I was blaming the hospital timetable and the noise and bustle for not ‘allowing’ me to sit. Then I drew my curtain and actually gave it a try. I was incredibly and frustratingly distracted. Some days later I gave it another go but it was no better. A sense of guilt crept in; ‘I should be meditating, why can’t I, why can’t I be bothered?’

In the past I’ve learnt to understand my attachment to my sitting and although the ‘should’ feeling still arises, it troubles me less and goes away quicker. However I found it harder to understand my seeming lack of motivation, especially after two and a half weeks of no formal meditation. Doubts about my practice arose. Then I received my Autumn O.B.C. Journal in the post. I read Rev. Master Myoho’s Article ‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step,’ at what seemed like just the right moment. It reminded me of advice I’d been given before. At times the desire to sit is enough. If it was the best I could do. I stopped beating myself up, and if not physically then mentally bowed to my desire to practice.

Since leaving hospital I still can’t adopt my usual sitting posture but have managed to resume my formal meditation. I am extremely grateful to Rev. Master Myoho, for her patient and wise words helped this patient no end.

Shoie



Trying to see the Buddha in everyone -

Recently I have had a difficult time at work, which has resulted in my experiencing a series of emotions. At times I have been fearful, resigned, despairing and angry.

Anger had been directed towards those whom I saw as being partly responsible for putting me in the position in which I found myself.

Work colleagues have been kind and supportive, making very positive comments which have buoyed me up.

However, a lot of negative comment has been made about a particular individual, whom I and they had seen as overreacting to a situation.

My main way of coping with all this has

been to sit still.

Sitting quietly with thoughts of anger and hurt has resulted in a dissipation of these strong emotions.

For whatever reason, a course of action has been taken. It was well considered by that person, and was made with that individual's life experience to call on - perhaps not a 'perfect' decision (as in ideal and actual), but the best that person could do or come up with at that moment.

I'm not quite sure what in Buddhist terms this would be called, but I came to the realisation that he/she was and is, 'perfect are, just as they are', and incidentally, so was I!

Fedor Bunge



*Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter.
Deadline for next issue is the end of November 2008.*





- Events elsewhere in Scotland with the Prior -

May 2008

Friday 23rd	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 24th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 25th	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm

June

Friday 20th	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 21st	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 22nd	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm

July

Saturday 26th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 27th	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm

For further details please phone :

Aberdeen -	Bob McGraw or Joyce & Gordon Edward	(01330) 824339 (01467) 681525
Aberfeldy -	Robin Baker	(01887) 820339
Dundee -	Elliott Forsyth	(01333) 451788
Peebles -	Julian Goodacre	(01721) 722539

— Day-to-day schedule at Portobello Buddhist Priory —

Daily (Every day except Mondays, Thursday afternoons & Sunday p.m.)

MORNING

7.00 Meditation
7.40 Morning service
8.15 Breakfast

EVENING

7.30 Meditation
7.55 Walking meditation
8.00 Meditation
8.30 Evening office

Early morning practice

You can come for early morning meditation, followed by short morning service. 7.00am –
8.15am

Evening practice

Meditation, walking meditation, meditation, evening office.
You are welcome to stay on for tea. 7.30pm –
8.45pm

Introductory evenings

Will be held on the second Friday of each month. A short talk about Buddhist practice and the Serene Reflection Meditation (Soto Zen) tradition. Meditation instruction and discussion. 7.30pm-9pm
May 11th, June 8th, July 13th, August 10th

Wednesday evenings

Midday service and meditation, followed by tea and a Dharma talk /discussion, evening office. 7.30pm–9.30pm

Sunday mornings

Meditation from 9.30am onwards, followed either by a Ceremony, Dharma discussion or Festival at 11am. It is fine to arrive or leave at 10.45am 9.30am-
12.30pm

Meditation days

These days alternate between Saturdays & Sundays. See centre pages for details. 35 min meditation on the hour every hour, followed by walking meditation and a 15 min break. 10am-4pm
(Saturdays)
1pm-4pm
(Sundays)

Festival mornings

Priory open for meditation from 9.30am, or come at 10.45am for the ceremony.

*Portobello Buddhist Priory is Scottish Charity no. SCO31788
Prior: Reverend Favian Straughan*