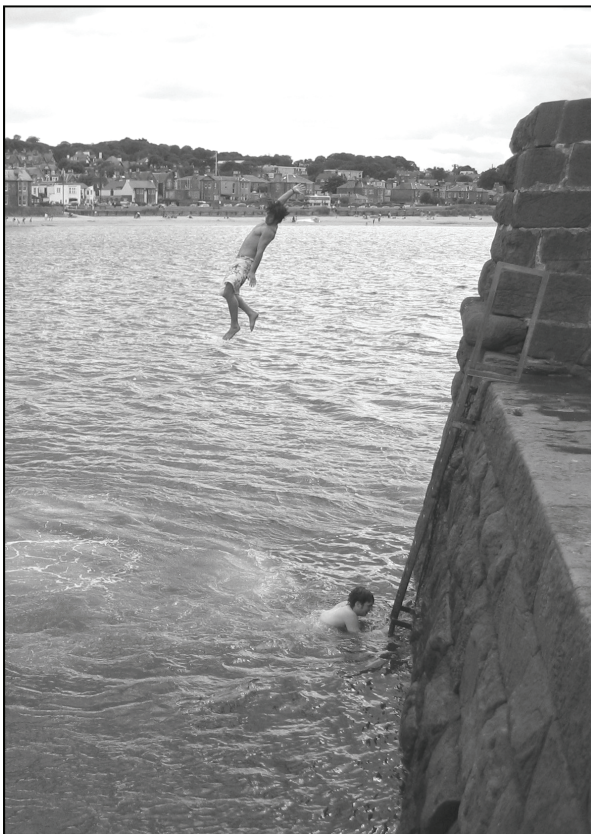


—Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



Cooling off in the heatwave, North Berwick harbour, July 2006

Newsletter & Calendar of Events

No. 24 September to December 2006

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

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

Daily (*Every day except Mondays, Thursday afternoons & Sunday evenings*)

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. You are welcome to stay for breakfast.

*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, discussion.

7.30pm-9pm

September 8th, October 13th, November 10th, December 8th

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. Please see page 6 for weekly variations. 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.

**> > > For specific events during September -
December 2006, see centre pages 6-7 > > >**

— 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
Rev Favian, Prior*

— Prior's Notes —

Overhearing on the radio “the fastest growing religion”, my ears pricked up, wondering if maybe that would be Buddhism - but the word ‘Moneytheism’ followed and then a chuckle. Another word that was part of this religio-speak was consumerism i.e. the accumulation of stuff.

There is a serious side to linking these secular words with religion. From a Buddhist perspective what at first may appear to be a secular business is seen to have a spiritual nature. Consumerism has a belief system, which we have partially unconsciously internalised and which powerfully motivates the choices we make. In a nutshell, the belief system rests on the statement: Buy this if you want to be

happy, feel whole and worthy and if this doesn't do it, then buy more. This statement is not directed to our basic material needs for food, clothing and shelter though it can come so disguised. The ‘religious’ institution that promotes this is the Market. We are exposed to its addictive commercial influence every day through the media. It has the power to generate wants and turn them into needs. In 1994 \$147 billion was spent on advertising, far more than on higher education. For Buddhists this conditioned need to acquire objects can be seen as a delusive response to a sense of lack, manifesting as Greed. So we have two of the traditional Three Poisons here, Greed and Delusion both in individuals and institutions. I'd like to focus on this sense of lack and how we train with it.

(Continued on page 4)

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Buddhism tells us that there is no autonomous self-grounded 'me' who stands in opposition to other selves. While acknowledging our perceived diversity of form it grounds this in a non-dual vision of interdependence: the suchness or this-ness of the experienced world, where subject and object are not two. When we live in ignorance of this truth, we act as though in isolation while suffering the anxiety of suspecting deep down the lack of substance of what we refer to as ourselves. One way of understanding this could be to say our spiritual motivation to become whole then acts delusively and attempts to fill the gap by projecting that sense of lack out into the world and then we get very busy accumulating, controlling and manipulating that world, viewed now as

something to be consumed.

How to transform this suffering? Buddhism suggests that we sit in the heart of that sense of lack without repressing or acting on it, so we can experience the empty nature of its threat and thereby allow for the possibility of a transformation of the whole edifice of delusion to develop. To know the emptiness of this sense of self is to come to the true nature of what we are, always at home in our universe because never separate from its deep interconnection. This grounds our true sufficiency in the present moment which includes a full appreciation of sense objects because now we are no longer laying the burden of our happiness upon them.



So what is important? - the space within which all this happens, the stillness within which a thought occurs, a feeling occurs. If you try to grasp that stillness by avoiding the thought or feeling you just stir up waves - so be content with the karma that comes to you, which is the thought or feeling of this moment. By karma I simply mean causes and conditions, the consequences that arise in the moment - don't analyse it, just be aware of what it is. Don't feed it and you see that it changes. Quite often it slips away into nothing in particular; it's quiet. That quietness may be lively, it may be dull. If it is dull, notice that it is dull - and already it's changing. If it is lively don't hold onto it - another thought will come; you don't have to stop the thought coming - you are not trying to do something special, not trying to have a particular thought and not trying to have no thoughts. In this way you can let the mind be quiet in the sense that you can recognise, or sense, the stillness in which all this happens. As you get accustomed to that you will see that you can be, in a certain way, conscious of the space even when thoughts and feelings are present: they don't have to drown out the stillness - this is moving deeper. Don't grasp after going deeper, look at where you are and you will go deeper.

*from 'Understanding how the Mind works,' Tape L 4 10/2002,
Rev Master Daishin Morgan*



Sotoba

Seated here
Viewing distant hills,
The memory returns
Of that night long ago
When, following the track
Through ravine and over pass,
Surprised by dusk,
Continued, guided by the gleam
Of whitened sand
Upon the rock path,
Until benighted.

Then, seated,
Back to tree,
Drew close the robe
Against the cooling air.

Mountains,
Surrounding, enclosing,
More sensed than seen.
Below,
The faint song
Of the hidden stream.

And, of that insight,
Did it happen then?
Or were thus my masters teachings
So illumined?
But while through him
The word was heard
Now it was,
Even in darkness, seen,
That wondrous generosity
Of insentient forms.

Footnote.

There are many passages within Dogen's poems and talks where one senses his affection for what we have come to call "the natural world" though he would probably have resisted making such distinction among the "myriad things". The foregoing verses were stimulated by the vivid imagery in the story concerning the Chinese poet *Sotoba* (Su Dongpo 1037-1101) encountered in Dogen's *Shobogenzo Keisei-Sanshoku* but which, interestingly, refer back to earlier stories in the Zen tradition concerning the teaching of the Myriad Things also related by Dogen in his *Keisei-Sanshoku* and in *Mujo-Seppo*.

Rawdon Goodier, Lay Minister

Weekend events in Edinburgh at the Priory

September 2006

Sunday 10th	Festival of Great Master Bodhidharma	11am
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Sunday 17th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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October

Sunday 15th	Festival of Bhaisajyaguru Tathagata	11am
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Sunday 22nd	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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November

Sunday 5th	Festival of Founder: Great Master Houn Jiyu	11am
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Sunday 19th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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December

Sunday 3rd	Festival of Buddha's enlightenment	11am
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Sunday 31st	New Year Festival	8pm onwards
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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 re-treats elsewhere – see next page)

Events elsewhere in Scotland with the Prior

September 2006

Friday 22nd	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 23rd	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 24th	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm
Monday 25th	Aberdeen group evening	6.30-9pm

October

Friday 27th	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 28th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 29th	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm
Monday 30th	Aberdeen group evening	6.30-9pm

November

Friday 24th	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 25th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 26th	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm
Monday 27th	Aberdeen group evening	6.30-9pm

For further details please phone :

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

Being reborn moment by moment -

In a recent Dharma talk, Rev Favian said that one of the first questions about Buddhism from those who are newcomers to it often concerns rebirth or reincarnation, as popular culture has made this link.

However, he continued, one way of looking at rebirth is to see how, moment by moment, we are reborn into suffering through an act of choice; through choosing to continue identifying with our 'story.' We're good at our stories, in which we invariably have the lead role. We can imagine the title credits rolling: The Life of the Universe – starring **ME!** In this role, we are often the sufferer, and the story-line tends to be: Why I Cannot Be At Peace Now. Somehow the universe is in a remarkable conspiracy to prevent me coming to rest: if only it allowed me to have this, achieve that, sort this, stop that, then all would be fine in my garden. However, like a recalcitrant orchestra where we are the conductor, it never quite comes together. No sooner is it all just about to happen when we notice that the double-bass has infuriatingly sneaked off for a smoke and the pianist has fallen asleep. The Universe is so *delinquent* !

This idea of choosing moment-by-moment to be reborn into the realm of suffering through identification with our story struck me as very powerful – and hopeful; because if it is moment-by-moment choice, then (a) it's our responsibility, not the world's, and

(b) we can simply choose not to go along with it. We can unhook ourselves from the story, and place our trust and faith in something much deeper.

As I've thought of this over the past few weeks, I've come to realise that the unhooking, while simple in theory, is not particularly easy in practice. It reminds me of trying to stop a children's roundabout by simply grabbing it; in so doing, we're quickly aware of how much momentum is caught up in it, as our shoulder-socket will painfully testify.



Here are four things I've found I need to remind myself of: firstly, we love stories, and have a deep attachment to them. Look at the rapt faces in a cinema audience; the popularity of the soaps; or the universal appeal of children's bedtime stories. Who knows why – my guess might be that as well as being a diversion from day-

to-day concerns, they help to make sense of a bewildering and complex world, to give us a handle on things, and thereby a measure of security. But the important thing is that we're easily seduced by them – they have a magic for us, and we fall for them all too easily. And that includes the ones we tell ourselves.

Secondly, it's not always easy to identify what the story that we tell ourselves actually is, or indeed that it is a story at all. But until we can see it clearly, how can we do anything about it? The most powerful internal stories usually have a few generous spoon-

fuls of memories thrown in, and memories lend credibility. Furthermore, the stories may also reflect deep-rooted beliefs or tendencies formed in childhood. Both can make it difficult to recognise that it is indeed only a story. Thirdly, the hard-to-shift stories are likely to be amplified and reinforced by society's values – or those promoted in popular media: *'Achieve! Work hard! You need lots – and you deserve it, poor thing! Contentment lies in the future, but only if -!'* And the clincher: *'Look what other people achieve/have/do - how do you measure up?'*

Finally, even when we recognise what the story is, in letting go of it we also expose ourselves to the possibility of change. And it seems that often in the face of change we instinctively curl up into a foetal ball, preferring the pain of the known and familiar rather than risk the uncertainty and insecurity of what change may bring with it.

One example from my own experience arises from having retired a few years ago. I had a very busy job, and questions of purpose or meaning just didn't arise. I arrived in the morning, and duties, responsibilities, tasks, meetings descended on me in a buzzing, thick cloud. There was a strong sense of being needed, of being useful, of carrying my little world on my shoulders; taking the strain. Since retiring, this has vanished. Most of the time, there's a bit of this, a little bit of that. A few days of work here, a voluntary commitment there, but no sense of the wave which lifts you off your feet and carries you along, which a busy job can feel like.

That simply is as it is. However, I have become aware that in the background since retiring, there is often a slight unease or dissonance; a restlessness or discomfort, like a mildly grumbling appendix. This isn't easy to bring into the light of day, but if I listen closely I can catch fragments of a story; a bit

messy and with many strands and more than one voice, but with a kind of consistent theme – life is about struggle and effort; we have to justify our existence; we should work hard, not be a drone; leave your stamp on the world; make a difference; things don't happen unless you make them; life's about what you do, and the rest is just talk, and talk is cheap; be aware of all the big problems in the world, and if you can't do much about them, at least worry about them; and if you're not very sure about your adequacy as a human being, then multiply all of this by 10. It's a bit perturbing to see this strung together, incidentally, as it's not what goes on in my conscious mind; but I can see the hard-to-shift quality of it in its link to lessons learnt in childhood and adolescence, as well as to messages in our culture.

What seems important for me with this messy but powerful kind of story is not so much to do with stopping identifying with it, as letting it come into the light of day and be fully known. It also seems a good idea not to try to suppress or disown it as does emerge, as if it were the Creature from the Black Lagoon. After all, as Rev Favian pointed out in another recent talk, there are 'not-two': there is 'just this.' Not an easy job, this Buddhism, but what seems at the core is trust and faith; letting True Nature do the work and getting out the way.

I've just been reading Rev Master Daizui's wise article in the recent Journal about spiritual simplicity, and I note his reminder about 'just doing the next thing.' So instead of trying to reach an elegant and penetrating conclusion to this article (thereby justifying my existence) I'm conscious it's my turn to make the tea tonight and potatoes need peeled, so – goodbye!

Bill Grieve



Falkland Retreat, June

How lucky we are to have such a beautiful place to go as a sangha and train together. This was my first visit and I'm very glad I finally made it over the water to the Kingdom of Fife!

Even though it was straight from work and we were all tired, just arriving at such a lovely spot gave an immediate lift to the spirits. The orchard was available to us and it felt as though that was a part of the garden. When we did a meditation session there on Saturday in the cool of the evening it was a real joy to feel that deep connection with the natural world.

It was very helpful for me to see the honesty and courage with which people were doing their training, allowing old patterns to come up and be seen. My own old defensive patterns came up sharply, too, and it's such a relief to realize that these old habits don't have to be given centre stage any more.

There is something very refreshing about working and co-operating as a group in the everyday tasks of cooking and cleaning as well. To recognize that there really ARE 101 different ways to wash and dry the dishes, and they're all just fine. MY way is not essential to the completion of the task.

On the Sunday we had a picnic lunch and time for more informal chats strolling up through the wooded river valley to stand behind a waterfall at the top. Magic. I'm hoping to go again next year now that I've had a taste.

A big thank you to Rev. Favian for leading the retreat, and to the sangha for such helpful sharing.

In gassho -

Kathleen Campbell



Unblocking the sink -

There was a week when I noticed that water was taking a long time to drain from the kitchen sink at home. I do not think of myself as

a practical person and I shirked taking any action, with the result that it was the weekend when I faced the unpleasant fact that the sink was completely blocked up. There was no prospect of help from the property management company for at least a couple of days and I had no useful tools or gadgets; meanwhile, there was a sink full of water.

I had to lie full length on the kitchen floor to dismantle the plastic pipework forming the U-bend in the waste pipe. It was not a pretty sight: the pipes were packed with thick, dark brown, oily muck which smelt

none too nice. But I managed to dislodge some of it with clumsy fingers; then I fitted the waste pipe back together, removed the sink plug - and the water just flowed away!

In that moment, it came to me strongly that there is no alternative to cleaning up - sooner or later - the mess that makes blockages in the mind. In doing so, we shall likely have to handle some nasty-looking stuff. Fortunately, the job does not have to be perfect before the water will begin to flow. If I am more careful in thought, word and deed - what I put down the sink in future - I may not have to repeat the task too often.

Alan Loveland



The Ship and Three Drums

At a recent Dharma evening at the Priory, someone asked for the meaning of the Ship and Three Drums symbol used within our tradition.

Some years ago, Rev Mugo White wrote an article for the Journal concerning the symbol, and the following is an extract from that article:

C This symbol is derived from the Chinese character 'shin' meaning 'heart/mind', and represents the Ship of the Buddhist Teaching by which all beings can reach the other shore of enlightenment. The three drums stand for the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, or the three Bodies of the Buddha (Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya and Dharmakaya). They can also represent Compassion, Love and Wisdom.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SHIP. A vehicle, a means of carrying all beings to the 'other shore', from the world of confusion to the world of Enlightenment. The

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

'ship' can be understood as our confused body and mind - our vehicle, its purpose being to enlighten confusion through the cleansing of karma in daily life. In confusion as to the True Nature of self we think there are many individual 'ships' when, in the still depths of the Great Ocean, there is known to be but the One Ship. Thus it is that the Bodhisattva aspiration to help all beings is realised, for when one person 'rows', all are transported to the other shore.

THE ACTIVITY OF THE DRUMS. "The drums resound through our Buddhist training, calling to all beings...", it is the 'rowing' that causes the drums to resound. "The Buddha lacks for nothing yet needs something". He needs our active help to show the Buddha's Truth in the world. We do this through practising Preceptual Truth in daily life.

THE DEEPER MEANING - BUDDHA NATURE. When confusion clears we see more clearly into the Truth; what was a ship and three drums emerges as the Buddha Nature (*shin* or *kokoro* (J)), what at first appeared as a boat, a paddle and a journey is in fact the journey's end (training and enlightenment are one). And still one has to pick up the paddle and row in faith as there are deeper levels of understanding and more and more subtle levels of karma.

THE WILL TO ENLIGHTENMENT. What causes a being to pick up the paddle, let alone use it? Inherent within the 'shin', the 'kokoro', is will (Bodhicitta —the will to enlightenment). Not in the usual way we understand 'will', more an inherent longing for the Truth, for Reality; an instinct to commit oneself to the path and to do so endlessly.

During the Buddha's time symbols such as the Dharmachakra (Wheel of the Law) were used to represent the Teaching. Today, our respectful use of symbols, images, altars — anything in fact that awakens or rekindles the Bodhicitta, can be of inestimable help in training.



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Reprinted from The Journal, August 1997. 'The Ship and Three Drums'

Contributors to this issue were Rev Favian, Rawdon Goodier, Bill Grieve, Kathleen Campbell and Alan Loveland. Thank you. The newsletter is produced for and by the Scottish sangha, so your contributions are always welcome, whether photos, artwork, poems, articles or reports of events anywhere in Scotland. Please send to the Priory or to Bill Grieve at williammgrieve@btinternet.com (0131-667-2241).

Deadline for next issue is the end of November 2006.

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