

—Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*New Year Altar, 2012, Portobello Priory
(with thanks to Debbie Sheringham)*

Calendar of Events

January-April 2014

Portobello Buddhist Priory
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— 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 Master Favian, Prior

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

- Weekend events at the Priory -

January 2014

Sunday 5th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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February

Sunday 2nd	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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Sunday 16th	Festival of Buddha's Renunciation	11am
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March

Sunday 2nd	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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Sunday 16th	Festival of Achalanatha	11am
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April

Sunday 6th	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 pm.

*(Visitors—please phone beforehand, and please note when the Prior
is holding retreats elsewhere: see inside back page)*

— Prior's Notes —

‘Enlightenment’ is one of those words that can too easily be reduced to a pretty picture of smiling Buddhas sitting serenely under trees, having undergone some great trip of awakening.

That smile and calmness doesn't have to be fake, but it's worth reminding ourselves of what precipitated it. The man had come to the end of his tether, all options seemed off the table. He had tried everything that the spiritual communities of his day seemed able to offer and nearly killed himself in the process. His sitting under the tree alone, seems both the result of a steel-like resolve to know 'the truth' and an utter abandonment of self, into the present moment.

To know the truth of this that sits and to 'discover' the nature of the present, is also our practice of Zazen. It is a practice that requires a radical honesty and a willingness to leap beyond all fear. I recently read some diary extracts of a young woman called Etty, who was killed in a concentration camp during World War 2. Like the Buddha, she too found a calm centre to her being, in the midst of darkness. She learnt how to "stop and listen to myself, to sound my own depths".

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She broke through to a deeper dimension of living that could not be destroyed by the fear and hatred around her, and she became a luminous figure to those who knew her and for whom she cared. In compassionately seeing and accepting her own fear and hate, she was able to let go of her hatred for the captors. She talks of really looking into their eyes and feeling pity for their terrible isolation. She understood how fear and hate can lead to despair and the real loss of our humanity.

Most of us, fortunately will not have to live through such extreme times, and yet the human capacity to use the very conditions life presents us with and to ‘discover’ the treasure that lies at the heart of ‘this that sits’ is to walk the same path with Etty and the Buddha.



Etty Hillesum, 1914-43

Colin Dewhust who was active as a Lay Minister in Aberdeen during the 1990's died on 14th September. He was buried in Kemnay Parish Church on 27th September. His wife Yvonne, who cared for him during the months he suffered from the cancer that was to take his life, wished that Colin's commitment to Buddhism be reflected in his funeral and memorial ceremonies. As part of this Yvonne asked me to be one of the friends and family who spoke about Colin at the memorial service. For those of you who knew Colin, here is what was said.

Tribute for Colin – 27th September 2013

I'm going to tell you how Colin became a friend through our shared practice of Buddhism. Many of you may not know, but Colin used to wear one of these – when he was a lay minister in the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. (*Note: At Yvonne's request I was wearing my Lay Ministers robe*).

I first met Colin in the late 80's through our Buddhist Meditation Group. Colin had a very enquiring mind that led him to study many subjects, for example his love of geology & astronomy. He first applied himself to the study of Buddhism by taking a correspondence course through the Buddhist Society. Theory was never enough for Colin, and as with his mastery of the practicalities of sailing and gliding, the next step in his study of Buddhism was to develop a regular meditation practice.

Colin became a committed member of the meditation group and took the Buddhist precepts (our vows) in 1991. He became a lay minister in 1995. As a lay minister, Colin used to introduce people to meditation practice, and as with every job he took on, he took it seriously. Although serious, through his personality he brought a light touch, grace and a generous and gentle sense of fun. Colin had a good eye for some of the comedy material available when people get together to spend time sitting in silence looking at a wall. This was real gift to others, helping them relax and be themselves.

Colin stepped down from the Lay Ministry in 1999. I remember the last week



long retreat we shared at the monastery, in 1998. We drove down together, and Colin told me how he was seeking clarity about whether he should continue in the lay ministry. Things were changing in both his work and in his inner life. In responding to these changes Colin brought the same qualities of honesty and seriousness to the decision that was the way he approached everything.

Standing down was just the next step for Colin, and he was able to continue his journey in his own creative

way. Making friends with what he called the Buddhist cat, that would curl up on the Buddha statue in the garden of their home, holidaying in Sri Lanka he would leave Yvonne before breakfast and go to the local temple to meditate with the monks, who showed their respect for him by inviting him as an honoured guest to a meeting with a famous teacher.

Being the partner of a meditator is not always easy, so Yvonne played an important part in this story. Creeping quietly around the house early in the morning, so as not disturb Colin's meditation, finding meditation stools left in odd places... Seriously, it is a tribute to Yvonne that she was so willing to support Colin, even though she did not share his Buddhist practice.

Colin's footsteps on the Buddhist path will continue to benefit those of us who were lucky enough to know him. On a practical level, in our little meditation group, we still use the sail bag Colin brought for us to keep some of our kit in. In our branch of Buddhism we particularly recognise that we are part of a living tradition that has been passed on from person to person for two and a half thousand years. Colin has a place in that lineage and as we remember him now, let us acknowledge our gratitude for his life and his Buddhist practice.

Bob McGraw

We have been watching the Throssel DVD on Meditation for the last couple of weeks and finding it still 'fresh' as Rev. Favian says.

One of the things that stuck me most forcibly was Rev. Master Daishin talking about how even after a long time of training things can still feel like 'wading through treacle'.

I am aware of how the same patterns pop up over and over. At the moment with the Festive season upon us it is the feeling of slight panic about needing to get things done NOW, even though retired; there are fewer people to buy for; intellectually knowing that it really is the giving and not the size or correctness of the gift that is important.

Still I catch myself conning over the list or worrying in the middle of the night about what to get for — Small stuff, old patterns.

When I had not long started meditating, just on my own before I came to the Priory and the washing machine mind used to be churning on in the middle of the night, I used to get up

and have a cup of tea in front of the fire with pen and paper and start writing about the PROBLEM with my non-dominant hand. (Right as my left hand is the writing one.)

Gradually I noticed that whatever the issue... worry about the children....issues at work....old angers and hurts inadequacies and mistakes.....whatever the issue the same pattern of writing was apparent.



To begin with the writing would be jaggy, small and sharp and pour out at a rate of knots.

Then the pace would slow and the size and shape become larger and rounder.

Then it would change from words to curly or wavy shapes and finally often I would be making the eternity symbol.

Sometimes it felt as if the problem had just evaporated.

This was a very helpful practice and one that served well for quite a long time.

I can't really remember the details of any one of these problems that loomed so large at the time, and don't

feel the same need to do the writing on the same way, or haven't recently. Now I may still get up and have a cup of tea in front of the fire in the middle of the night, but then I just sit for a while and the mind calms down by itself without me having to do anything concrete.

It is interesting how there was always that bigger picture waiting for us to reconnect with it in any way we could. The full moon always there even when we can't quite see it.

How fortunate we are to be able to train together at the Priory.

Deep bows for the teaching and help

Kathleen Campbell



Sangha members at Portobello Priory for the Festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment, November 2013 (with thanks to Jenny Smith)



Invocation of Sanbō Kōjin —
OM KEM BAYA KEM BAYA
UN BATTA SOWAKA!

OM – Peace

KEM – Emptiness

BAYA – Fear

UN – Syllable of fierceness

BATTA – Weapon that destroys fears

SOWAKA – All hail!

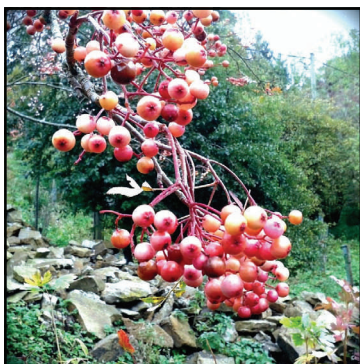
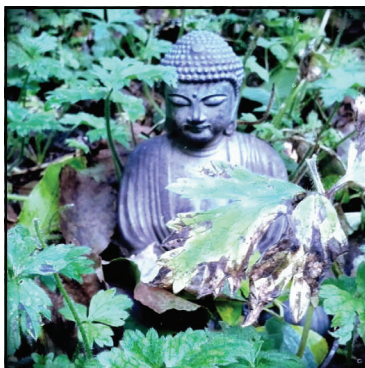


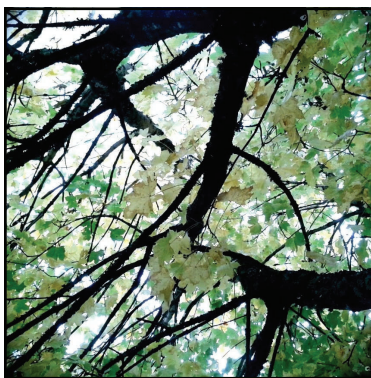
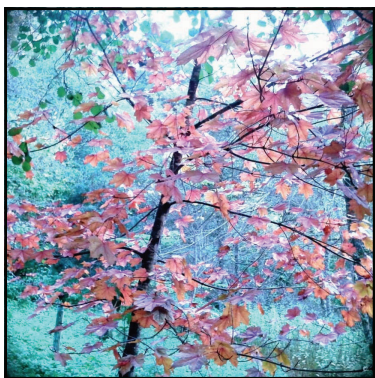
Sanbō Kōjin 三 宝荒神 “the fierce deity of the three treasures”

Sanbō Kōjin is a Buddhist guardian deity, known for his protective nature of the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha). We chant this invocation at our New Year’s Eve Ceremony to help cleanse our karma for the coming year.

(With thanks to Debbie Sherringham who saw details of the invocation in a hand-out at Throssel, originally written by Rev Master Kōten.)

Images from Throssel during the October Segaki sesshin —





- with thanks to Debbie Sheringham

The Art of Zen



I came across this beautiful sculpture of Manjusri on the ‘Buddhist Museum’ web site. It is an early 20th century Tibetan bronze casting and stands about 20 centimetres high. The detailing on the figure is particularly fine and it is in very good condition. I’m not an expert on Buddhist art or iconography, in fact I first thought that with its slim waist and delicate features this Manjusri was female, but I liked it and made an offer that was accepted; it should arrive before Christmas. It also struck me that before it arrives I should find out a bit about my new sculpture beyond the aesthetic.....

Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom and whose name means ‘noble gentle one’ or in Sanskrit, ‘sweetly glorious’ is regarded as one of the oldest and most significant bodhisattvas in the Mahayana canon and is often to be seen on the left hand side of the Buddha. Here he is seated on the traditional lotus leaf throne, but is frequently depicted sitting on a lion, ‘the king of a hundred animals’ symbolising the stern majesty of wisdom.

In his right hand he wields a flaming sword to cut through delusion and to his

left side (sometimes depicted in his left hand) is the Prajnaparamita Sutra, held in a lotus leaf. This is the 'Scripture of Great Wisdom' that we chant during morning service, the perfection of transcendent wisdom, from 'Prajna', meaning wisdom and 'paramita', perfection. It is interesting to note that 'Prajna' or wisdom is rooted in two words - 'Pra', meaning supreme or springing up like a spontaneous type of knowledge and 'jna' – consciousness, knowledge or understanding.

Wisdom in western terms, perhaps emerging from early Greek philosophy and as expressed in Christian philosophy seems to be knowledge that is gained by having many experiences in life. Wisdom is the accumulated sum of learning over a long time resulting in the ability to judge what is true and right. Arising from this view is the not unfamiliar image of a wise sage, normally an elderly man with a long beard. We only have to picture Plato, Aristotle or Solomon (although God bestowed wisdom on Solomon to allow him to rule as a wise King).

In the Buddhist tradition wisdom is also related to having or developing knowledge, but the texture of this knowledge is subtly different and perhaps not so reliant on the accumulation of experience and learning, but more closely related to 'awakening', with an emphasis on the 'Pra' of 'Prajna'. This spontaneous awakening is a significant aspect of our own Soto Zen practice, expressed in Great Master Dogen's teachings on the importance of the present moment, and the sometimes sudden realisation of the true nature of things. Manjusri is a prominent figure in the Lotus Sutra, where he features in discourse with Shakyamuni Buddha. The Lotus Sutra was held in high esteem in Tendai Japanese Buddhism and it was in this order that Zenji Dogen trained as a monk.

Manjusri's sword is raised in the compassionate act of cutting us free of the delusion that binds us to suffering and attachment. In relation to wisdom, which is the first of the three divisions of the Noble Eightfold Path, right view or right understanding is the first factor and of right view the Buddha said-

If you have attachments to this life,

You are not a spiritual person.

If you have attachments to the world of existence

You do not have renunciation.

If you have attachments to your own purpose

You do not have the thought of enlightenment.

If grasping arises, you do not have the right view.'

He went on to say,

'And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge with regard to stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the stopping of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the stopping of stress: This, monks, is called right view'

Here, citing the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha speaks of stress rather than the more familiar suffering, or at least the translator has chosen to use this term. In reading this I was instantly struck by how modern it sounded. I have often struggled to explain the meaning of 'suffering' when asked about our practice. To most people suffering is a painful experience, often associated with anguish or physical pain. But stress is a condition of life that most of us understand and have experienced at some point in our lives. While stress can be a real and serious medical condition, it is often used to express the kind of suffering caused by greed, hatred and desire. We would all probably admit to feeling stressed when things are not going our way, or in other words when we are not getting what we want. How many times have we heard someone say- 'I'm stressed out' by work or by this or that situation or person? Almost always if we look closely at the circumstances of this kind of stress we can see delusion at its core. We can use Manjusri's fiery sword to cut through this delusion when we do not turn away, but allow ourselves to feel the stress and sit with it, looking steadily at the cause, not grasping or rejecting. Perhaps just sitting in this way is the direct practice of right view and a true expression of wisdom.

I am grateful to the unknown Tibetan artist who made this sculpture and for the teaching that has helped me develop my understanding of a feature of our tradition that I had perhaps taken for granted or misunderstood.

David Campbell



South of the Lake

An imaginary soliloquy by an anonymous disciple of Shi T'ou - "Stonehead" (Sekito Kisen 700-790) the author of the Sandokai.

1.

West of the River¹
Some of the Great One's
imitators
Became a little tiresome
With their kicks and shouts.
So now, growing old,
I have returned
South of the Lake
Where you once dwelt
Atop that rock, in the place
My mind's eye sees you still
As long ago.

2.

Although with you each day
How little did I know you then,
Yet thinking this recalls
Your verse concerning your First Son².
"Living long together
Yet knowing not his name,
Which even Ancient Buddhas
Did not know".
So how indeed could I
Invade your depths,
Enfolding everything,
Which even you knew not.

3.

Smiling I recall that visit³
By the wordy layman.

Despite your hand
Across his mouth,
And insight that ensued,
He went on finding ready answers,
Sometimes wise and often memorable,
But maybe a mite too many
And too quick.
Though I'm told it was his daughter
Who had the last word,
First⁴.
But perhaps my irony is misplaced
For "carrying water, chopping wood"⁵
Will be remembered
Long after I'm forgot.

4.

To me you said
"Stop barking like a dog"⁶
And I found gratitude
Within my silence.
Though in this life
I've often strayed
Into that country
Of obstructing mountains
And great rivers⁷,
And there lost become
Until, resting quietly
Among the rocks,
I've glimpsed a distant passage
Or traced a footpath

Leading to the ford.

5.

Sometimes I dream,
As you once dreamt
Of riding Wisdom's turtle
In silent deeps of Being,
With Huineng for our guide⁸.
And then I wonder
If in your dream he was as seen
In life by you with youthful eyes⁹,
Or with your insight of maturity.

Can I indeed, with passing years,
Recall your face when even mine
Grows unfamiliar?
But even when the image fades
The teachings in his words,
With yours, become embodied,
And remain.

Rawdon Goodier
(Composed in August 1997)

¹ Dumoulin. 1.161

² Sekida: Hegiganroku 264

³ Chang:Original Teachings 174

⁴ Sasaki: Man of Zen

⁵ Chang: Original Teachings

⁶ Suzuki: Essays 3. 45

⁷ Sandokai

⁸ Keizan:Denkoroku 190

⁹ Suzuki Essays 3.116

(This imaginary soliloquy first appeared in the May-August 2012 edition of the Newsletter)



*Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter.
Deadline for next issue is mid-April 2014*





- Events elsewhere in Scotland with the Prior -

February 2014

Friday 21st	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 22nd	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 23rd	Aberdeen Morning Retreat	10am-1pm

March

Friday 28th	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 29th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 30th	Aberdeen Morning Retreat	10am-1pm

April

Friday 25th	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 26th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 27th	Aberdeen Morning Retreat	10am-1pm

(N.B. dates for Inverness visit yet to be arranged)

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
Inverness -	Shooie	(01997) 477378

— 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

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 afternoons

- are usually held on the second Saturday of each month. A short talk will be given about Buddhist practice and the Serene Reflection Meditation (Soto Zen) tradition, with meditation instruction and discussion.
Saturday 11 January, 8 February, 8 March, 12 April

2.30-4pm

Wednesday and Friday 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*

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 Master Favian Straughan*