

—Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



The redesigned Priory garden with tree and Buddhist plaques

Newsletter & Calendar of Events

No. 22 January to April 2006

**Portobello Buddhist Priory
27 Brighton Place, Portobello
Edinburgh, EH15 1LL**

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email: prior@pbpriory1.freemove.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.

January 13th, February 10th, March 10th, April 14th

7.30pm-9pm

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. For those who cannot attend the whole morning, it is fine to arrive or leave at 10.45am

*9.30am-
12.30pm*

Meditation days

See centre pages for details. 35 min meditation on the hour every hour, followed by walking meditation and a 15 min break.

9.30am-4pm

Festival mornings

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

**> > > For specific events during January–
April 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 Ji-yu-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 —

The front garden at the Priory has recently been given a **Buddhist face lift**, including the shaping of the lawn into a circle with border flowers and a small tree planted in the centre to suggest the living heart of our practice. Paul, a local potter and congregation member, kindly made and donated four plaques to decorate the lawn circle, each one illustrated with a Buddhist image. They are 'The Footprints of Shakyamuni', 'Earth Witness Buddha', 'Stupa', and a 'Lotus Flower'. Each image has its own teaching to offer but the hope is that laid out in sequence around the lawn they support each other more fully in describing something of the life of training, while ultimately allowing the mystery of the 'living heart' to express itself directly. I'll offer a few personal comments on each plaque image hopefully to help point out some of their meaning.

'The Footprints of Shakyamuni': This is reputedly one of the earliest signs of Bud-

dhism, pre-dating any personalised statues. It seems appropriate to start with this one as it visually shows the beginning of treading the Path of Training. We both follow in the footsteps of Shakyamuni and make the path our own by actually walking, actually training, this particular way, with this mind and body and this particular life.



'Earth Witness Buddha': This figure represents the enlightenment of Shakyamuni, sitting under the Bodhi tree. By touching the earth he calls upon the universe to bear witness to its awakened reality, one with his own. It illustrates the connectedness of all things and the fruit of training. One way of talking about this perhaps is to see it as the ending of suffering, when we willingly let go of clinging to a separate self-



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sense and entrust ourselves utterly to 'this place', where we are, which is always under the Bodhi tree.

'The Stupa': This is an ancient image of a burial mound and this particular one is Tibetan in origin. It seems to me to both illustrate the impermanence of all things and yet points to that reality when the conditioned mind and body form dissolve. The stupa takes on cosmic proportions and yet is still called the true mind, speech and body of the Buddha. By symbolically connecting 'heaven' and 'earth' the stupa speaks something of the enlightened



life; as one grounded in samsara and yet awakened to the non-dual.

'The Lotus Flower': What flows from the enlightened life of Shakyamuni or proportionally surely, from any life where spiritual training is embraced, is dharma, the expression of the precepts. The ripe seeds of the enlightened flower spring out into the world as dharma offerings to all beings. As with the stupa, the lotus connects the seemingly murky world of its roots with the Buddhaland of its bloom: Nirvana and samsara are one.



Rev Master Haryo's visit to Dundee, Aberfeldy and Aberdeen Groups

In late October, as part of his visit to Scotland, Rev Master Haryo made a trip up to Aberdeen, stopping off to lead a Retreat in Dundee en route. Rev Master was accompanied by Rev Favian. The Dundee Retreat was a joint meeting of the Aberfeldy and Dundee groups and took place in the spacious accommodation provided by the Dundee University Chaplaincy Centre. In Aberdeen Rev Master led a Sunday Retreat for the Aberdeen Group at Bob McGraw's house. On Monday, after exploring the market in Aberdeen, Rev Master and Rev Favian shared lunch with group members in a Turkish restaurant. There then followed a visit to the Aberdeen Maritime museum and some rest time at Eddie Shield's house before Rev Master and Rev Favian jointly led the regular weekly group meeting at the Quaker meeting house.

Rev Master said at one stage that he finds travelling unsettling, and we are all grateful for the effort he put into this hectic schedule. As a result of this many members of the Scottish sangha got the opportunity to meet him and to ask questions.

Bob McGraw, Lay Minister

Rev. Master Haryo's talk—Sunday 6th November

Rev Master Haryo's stimulating Dharma talk at Portobello Priory summarised the main elements of our training. Whether pushed by our suffering, or pulled by the desire to develop a deeper way of seeing things, one thing which unites us in coming to training is an underlying desire for change; a wish to

change something about ourselves.

And change is central to Buddhism; but change isn't seen as a random process – everything occurs because of a long, traceable stream of causes and effects. And in Buddhism, changing ourselves is possible, by putting in different causes to produce

different effects – although this requires a lot of effort.

When we set out on this process of change, we have expectations and hopes. And often reality doesn't match our expectations. Rev. Master amusingly described how his DIY skills often led to him finding himself under the monastery floor, fixing burst pipes while everyone else was having tea or meditating. 'What am I doing here?' he would wonder; 'This isn't what I signed up for!' But over time he learned to take what he'd been given, bow and say yes to it; and use it as a means of weakening self-centredness. No matter what was going on, it could be used as the place of practice; it became less about what was happening externally, more about what was being done internally. And this applies to all of us, if we can see it.

Another aspect of training was not only the formal meditation, but what Rev. Master described as 'taking one step at a time, listening to the heart, and just responding without argument to however that played out, moment by moment.' This could apply to apparently small and insignificant actions: kicking one's shoes into a corner, and something saying perhaps they should be put straight; not taking a shortcut the wrong way down a one-way street, even

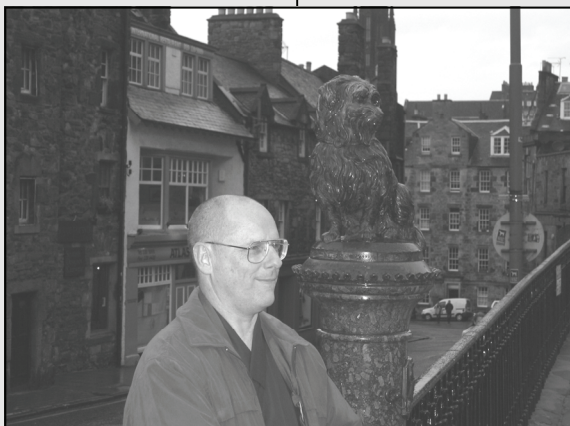
although nobody was watching – listening to the sense of what it was right to do, not arguing, just accepting the flow and letting go of all the 'short cut' options which the self throws up. This is active meditation.

More deeply, it's about being the best human being we can, in the way that seems appropriate for us. Rev Master reminded us of the rarity of human life, and being here with like-minded people – it's remarkably rare and we are extremely fortunate to have this opportunity, but we often undervalue it, simply because it's here

in our laps. To take the opportunity of this offering of human life, and to do the best we can with it, is what is most important.

Rev Master reminded us that when monks go out with a begging bowl, they don't pick and choose; they accept whatever they get, and they're grateful for it. Whatever happens in our day is what's in our begging bowl, and our question should be; 'How do I use this to further myself as a human being, to live a good life?' Living a good and noble life doesn't always necessarily entail enjoyment or fun; it's more about giving way to doing things that are meaningful. Parents will work tirelessly to provide good education for their children because it's meaningful, not because it's fun.

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Rev Master at the statue of Greyfriars Bobby in Edinburgh

Weekend events in Edinburgh at the Priory

January 2006

Sunday 8th	Meditation Day	9.30am-4pm
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Sunday 15th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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February

Friday 10th	Buddhism and Burns' Night!	7pm onwards
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Sunday 12th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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Sunday 19th	Festival of Buddha's Renunciation	11am onwards
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March

Sunday 5th	Meditation Day	9.30-4pm
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Sunday 19th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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April

Sunday 9th	Meditation Day	9.30am-4pm
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Sunday 16th	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 – see next page)

Events elsewhere in Scotland with the Prior

January 2006

(N.B. Due to Rev Favian being at Throssel Hole during part of January, the normal events involving him in Aberfeldy, Dundee & Aberdeen will be postponed.)

February

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	7.30-9pm

March

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

April

Friday 21st	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 22nd	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 23rd	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm
Monday 24th	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

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At the end of our life, what's likely to be important is whether you can leave this world with a clear mind and a clear conscience, rather than a lot of people with hurt feelings; that your family loves you and you love them – not whether you've been a big corporate executive. What seems important is how we do things, rather than what we do.

And recognising the mistakes we have made is central. In some of our ceremonies, we recognise those mistakes, acknowledge to ourselves the harm we may have caused, and honestly say; 'Yes, that happened.' We look at it squarely, and resolve not to do it again, to the best of our ability. If we slip up, we can say, OK, let's not get bogged down here; I can learn from this and move forward. The ceremony that's to do with repentance is called *sange* – it's about contrition, not guilt. There isn't a lot of room in Buddhism for guilt, but there is room for honest assessment of how we've done in pointing ourselves forward, and not dwelling in the past.

Even those little things that we brush aside and say, oh, that won't matter – the unkind word, the little untruth. All these things are like weights that weigh down the spirit, and the act of contrition, of saying yes, I'm sorry for that, and letting it go, frees something up in us: it allows something in us to rise up, and allows our vision to be that much clearer; reality to be that much brighter and more crystalline and pristine.

So it's not just sitting: it's bringing that sitting, that stillness, that awareness into

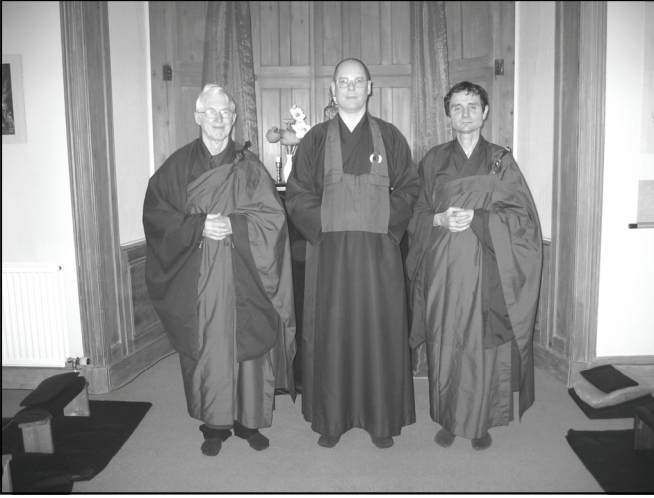
our actions, and trying to act from the place that causes the least amount of harm and weights on our hearts, to ourselves and others. You can't just sit, and then go off and get up to whatever you want, because you'll just be weighing down that which has just had its will to rise up stirred by meditation.

And the process of change becomes less about a goal that you're reaching; it becomes more of a continuous process without a final object. You just take one step after the other, accepting a process of growth that is very naive, but very satisfying. The Precepts become more something that just arises naturally out of our behaviour; and life becomes more of something that just happens naturally. Thinking becomes something that just arises naturally out of our being; we don't have to think our thoughts so much any more. We just live, and the thoughts arise and pass, and help us in the moment, and then they're gone. There's just the stillness from which everything arises including the feeling of self, sometimes, and the feeling of others, sometimes; and as one is not attached to what's there, then one doesn't push away, and one doesn't grasp. Life becomes much easier. Still a lot of work, however, because the process is not one that does itself; and human life is an ongoing process of meeting change.



**For a full transcript of this talk,
email Bill Grieve at
williamgrieve@btinternet.com**

Brown Kesa Ceremony



On October 2nd during Rev. Master Haryo's visit to Portobello Priory he and Rev. Favian presented Rawdon Goodier and Neil Rothwell with a brown kesa, a symbol of the precepts. Rev. Master told us of the criteria for receiving the kesa. They include: STABILITY of training, proven over many years and/or under difficult circumstances; SERVICE beyond "the call of duty" to buddhism and/or sentient beings;

MATURITY of training in that non-self should generally be obvious in his/her actions and the paramitas of tenderness, charity, benevolence, and empathy generally be in evidence.

We sincerely thank them both for their training.

Rev Favian

Interfaith—

Rawdon represented Rev Favian at the second meeting of Edinburgh religious leaders and at the Reception held at the Scottish Parliament

to celebrate the Scottish Interfaith week in late November.

Keeping sitting - -

My training has been very hesitant over the years.

Strangely (perhaps), this has strengthened my resolve to continue training. I have felt dissatisfied and ill at ease with myself during the periods that I have not sat, thus making it blindingly obvious that it is a good thing to do.

My life with Mara holding the reins most of the time has not been comfortable.

The importance of regular training for me cannot be over-emphasised, and I suspect that once started on the road, any deviations or attempts to backtrack are extremely painful for most trainees.

So, the advice in the scriptures to keep sitting, whether 'brightly alive or dying' is good.

Fedor Bunge, Lay Minister

The Ancestral line: making the Bodhisattvas your friends.

My initial reactions to the recitation of the Ancestral Line at Throssel Hole Priory in the early 1980's were rather ambivalent.

This part of the morning office was invariably undertaken sitting on one's heels - a position which, for me and I suspect quite a few others, rapidly became much more painful than attempts at the half lotus posture!

The lengthy recital gave one ample opportunity to explore and, sometimes perhaps, come to terms with the pain. Then of the long list of names only a handful struck any chord of recognition. And yet I remember sensing that something important was being pointed to which went beyond a simple acknowledgement of the lineage of our particular tradition.

Later, Rev Koten Benson's chart of the Ancestral Line (JOBC 3.3), which gave the dates and the Indian and Chinese names of the early ancestors, was helpful in linking the individual names to stories encountered within the Zen tradition, or to the numerous references in Dogen's writings, and I became more aware of how our particular branch fitted within the zen family tree. By the time I first attended Jukai I had met with Dogen's accounts of his inspection of the silks recording the ancestral lines of the Chinese masters of his day and, from participation in the Ketchimyaku ceremony, I began to get some appreciation of why Dogen attached such importance to his being able to

see such "documents".

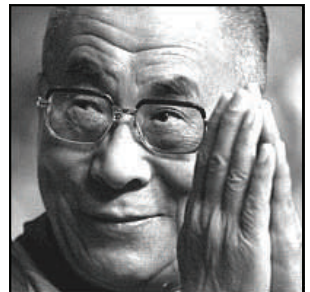
In recent years a careful reading of Keizan Zengi's Denkoroku has helped to develop this understanding a little further so that the character and contribution of the individual masters has begun to emerge more strongly from this long sequence of names - not all of them by any means as there doesn't seem much information readily available to us concerning the masters following Keizan Zengi until we get to Keido Chisen - though I guess their biographies must be recorded within the Japanese tradition.

The feeling grows that we are linked to these figures by more than a historical sequence. It seems that however inadequate our own practice may appear to us, to the extent that we persevere we share our experience of it with them and this knowledge, and the sharing, become infused with gratitude. We revere them as ancestors and predecessors to whom we owe our opportunity to practice but, increasingly, it becomes possible to sense the depth of their humanity and their community with the masters and teachers of our own generation. Words from the Jukai ceremony come to mind, yes, perhaps we can indeed "make the Bodhisattvas our friends".

*Rawdon Goodier
From the Lay Ministry Newsletter Jan 98
Revised Nov 05*

Dalai Lama in Edinburgh—

Rev Favian accepted the invitation to hear the Dalai Lama speak to an interfaith gathering in the Usher Hall in early November.



Greetings from Gullane -

Our meditation group continues to meet every Sunday evening, and we report in over a cup of tea afterwards. For me this is absolutely life sustaining, and a great help in maintaining my eagerness to sit in my box (back porch) every day. We have been focussing on the minute details of mindful sitting, and also sitting for 40 minutes, and have all found it useful, if challenging in what it can bring to consciousness.

I have been unwaged for seven months now, having retired very early from my General Practice career. It is a huge learning experience, and I have no regrets. I am finally free to face parts of myself which I simply could not allow space when I had to function in my professional capacity, and I feel very privileged to have the time and space which I have. I have found out that many of the things in my behaviour which I used to blame on work are exactly the same without work, or only slightly different, and also that it takes a huge amount of self discipline to get down to doing the things which I promised myself I would do. I do not recommend abandoning work, unless, like me you have been very unhappy for a very long time in work, and have thought it through very carefully. I no longer have the variety of travel, entertainment, a car, retail therapy.....and I am really really not missing any of that, it just makes me focus more on the other things, and appreciate everything more deeply.

It is so important to me that the Priory is there, and I often think of things which Rev. Favian and others have said, it feels like a live presence, and I am thankful to everyone who keeps it going.

If anyone would like to come out to see us over festive season do give me a call; 01620-842415.

Tessa Thomas-Pyne

Three poems –

Content
In this moment -
Thoughts can arise
And fade into silence.

Deep grey sky,
Bare trees, sharp wind.
The flying birds
Do not disturb the stillness.

My daughter turns sixteen:
Misty sun;
A brilliant frost.

Neil Rothwell, Lay Minister

Asleep In The Sun

Meditation used to be easy. I came to it just over 2 years ago, starting, as Rev. Master Jiyu says at the beginning of *Roar of the Tigress*, 'because I had nowhere else to go.' Years of feeling inadequate. Of mentally beating myself up when I didn't meet my standards. Of trying to fix 'me'. Therapy? Been there. Done that. T-shirt didn't fit.

So then I try meditation, a little Zen and Wham; everything changes.

Or maybe nothing changed except perspective. Things that seemed so important melted away. Age-old problems disappeared, not because I'd fixed them, but because the part of me that had been generating them simply wasn't there. Like I said; it used to be easy.

Now? Now life seems easy and meditation hard . . . Oops, that's separation. Life and meditation are one . . . Regardless, now noth-

ing seems to come up. My mind wanders off . . . La-la-la . . . 'Oh yeah, the wall'. . . La-la-la. A part of *Roar of the Tigress* rings true; '- an awful lot of people get satisfied part way . . . they sit down and picnic on the road of life.'

That's how I feel. Content to get by. I'm happy, why risk changing things? In the words of Dogen, 'Who wants to be a dog asleep in the sun?' Well part of me does! But in the words of Jagger; 'You can't always get what you want.'

Besides, there's a deeper part that doesn't want that.

So I sit and I wander. Not as lonely as cloud, but sometimes with a clouded mind. But that's OK.

Always going on...

Stuart McDonald

After a first stay at Throssel -

One thousand gasshos for your help
One thousand gasshos for the care
One thousand gasshos for the correction
One thousand gasshos for the Dharma
One thousand gasshos for the silence
One thousand gasshos for the love

You don't have to say gassho for second helpings.

John Dickson

From 'Pure Reason'—

a poem from The Middle Way - Journal of the Buddhist Society

The trees sing with the breeze
Nobody ever asked them if they
wanted to
But they are glad to sway
Which ever way the wind blows.

Contributed by Jim Morrow

Contributors to this issue were Rev Master Haryo, Rev Favian, Bob McGraw, Bill Grieve, Fedor Bunge, Rawdon Goodier, Tessa Thomas-Pyne, Neil Rothwell, Stuart McDonald, John Dickson & Jim Morrow. 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 williamgrieve@btinternet.com, or 'phone to discuss on 0131-667-2241. The deadline for the next issue is the end of March 2006.

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