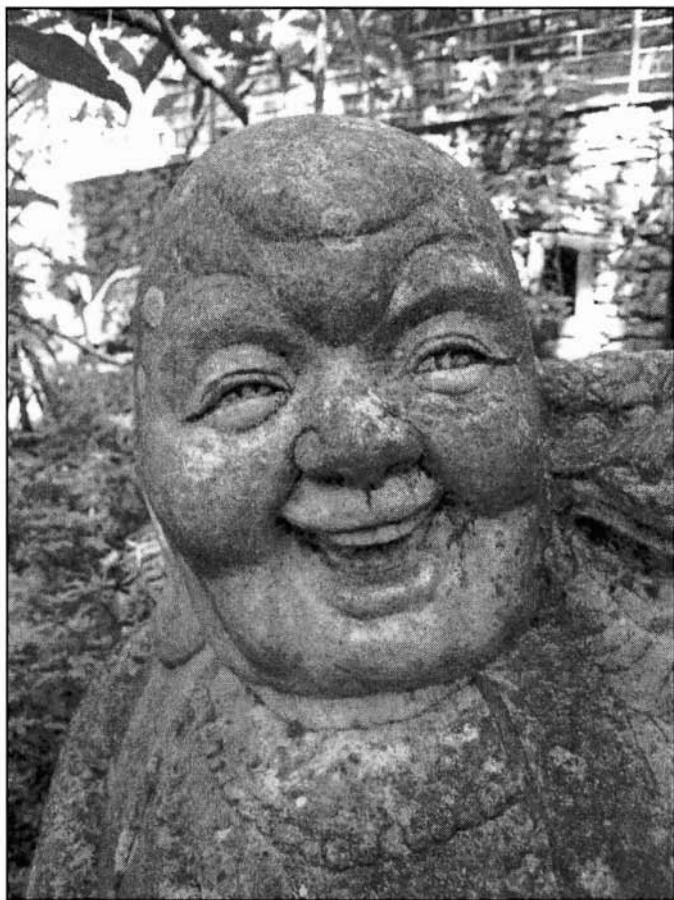


# —Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*A merry Maitreya Buddha  
in the Botanical Gardens, Funchal, Madeira*

## *Calendar of Events* September to December 2007

**Portobello Buddhist Priory**  
27 Brighton Place, Portobello  
Edinburgh, EH15 1LL  
**telephone and fax (0131) 669 9622**  
**email: [prior@pbpriory1.freemove.co.uk](mailto:prior@pbpriory1.freemove.co.uk)**  
**website: [www.portobellobuddhist.org.uk](http://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 -**

### **September 2007**

Sunday 23rd	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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### **October**

Sunday 7th	Festival of Great Master Bodhidharma	11am
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Sunday 14th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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### **November**

Sunday 4th	Festival of our Founder, Great Master Houn Jiyu	11am
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Sunday 18th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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### **December**

Sunday 2nd	Festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment	11am
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Monday 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 p.m.

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

# Newsletter

no.27

September 2007

## — Prior's Notes —

**E**ver since we were children and learned to communicate with words and think conceptually we seem to receive the world as a story. I loved my mother's ability to fill my mind with exciting characters and adventures; her imagination fired mine and gave me a love of the story book.

One can see the power of this process as pretty fundamental to how we grow to interpret the world: the adventure of my life with me as the main character, the trials and tribulations, the successes and failures, the objects of love and hate and the goal of the happy ending. It's probably a universal story, with each of us believing it to be uniquely ours.

I don't wish to question or trivialise this perhaps essential facility in our cognitive development but to merely point to the other facility that quietly goes along with it and pre-dates our language skills, namely our capacity to fully be in present moment awareness. To see a young child with that gob-smacked look of wonder on its face as it gazes out on the world may remind us of its reality.

Can we be open to the direct presence of this world too, just as it is, without always having recourse to words and concepts? Moment to moment, can we

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allow the senses to function innocently without a running commentary of grasping or rejection? This is not a wish to return to infancy or a denial of our interpretive powers; but as meditating buddhists we are recognising that our addiction to 'me and my story' can become a source of suffering. Can we come to see how our stories filter out and distort 'this moment', when our overriding concern is to promote or defend our perceived sense of self in the story of 'this moment'?

One of the challenges of our practice is to rest in

(Continued on page 2)

the given of now, without adding anything to the world that is arising: the bird song, the traffic rumble, the ache of our backs, not interfering with the effortless arising and the awareness of 'this' functioning. Can I notice how again and again I reject this fullness and dip into memory to reconstruct myself? Yet to taste the vivid and dynamic feel of now is also to risk releasing our self-story into the connectedness of what we are with all that is arising. Buddhism teaches that in this empathic connection, compassion flowers and in this seeing, wisdom matures.

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## *Stopping and Slowing*

**T**here are a couple of practices I have found helpful in daily life which I would like to share. These are particularly helpful at times when we are busy or feel overwhelmed with the amount we have to do.

The first of these is to simply stop. Whatever we are doing it is possible to spend some time simply connecting with Being. This means simply doing nothing for a while. The amount of time is less important than the act of stopping – it can be anything from a few seconds to, say, a half hour lunch break. I find about 5 minutes a good time, saying that for this period I will just connect with what I am aware of. Often tension can arise to the surface, perhaps being fuelled by the underlying drive to “get things done”. By opening to this tension or other feeling we can connect with Buddha Nature, which is not

fundamentally separate from the emotional turbulence and does not judge it.

Simple though this is, it can be quite a difficult practice to do. In general, there are few situations when we cannot take a few moments. The difficulty can arise because we have become attached to the outcome of what we are doing, or because there is an unconscious desire to avoid the tension or agitation. It can be helpful to have a simple external reminder e.g. a watch that beeps on the hour or tying it in to a particular activity e.g. a tea break.

A second practice is to slow things down a little, if we are conscious of rushing. Again, this is quite a discipline, as there is a desire to get things done. I've often noticed that by slowing a little I can be more conscious of what I'm actually doing and it may occur to me to do things in a slightly different way, which is more effi-

cient. Sometimes, it can be helpful to let one or two things drop off the bottom of the “to do” list (or be postponed) in order to live each moment as fully as possible and to let a sense of space and light into everyday activity.

If we are meditating regularly, this tends to naturally colour the rest of our activities, bringing more moment-to-moment

awareness. Stopping and slowing can be ways of developing this awareness and cultivating the continuity between zazen and everyday life.

*Neil Rothwell, Lay Minister*

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## *Water Glass*

Brimming  
Attentive  
You remind me

Water Glass

Dried  
Scummed  
You remind me

*Lesley Scott Reid*



## *Japanese area, Havana Botanic Gardens*



**T**he Japanese area is in a quiet part near the centre of the Havana Botanic gardens. When I first came across it, I thought why Japanese? What is Cuba's connection with Japan? There was a lake with a bridge leading to a covered balcony, one or two Japanese style sculptures but no Japanese plants.

I remembered the decayed grandeur of the Havana colonial houses with their large rooms and high ceilings. Whole families are crushed into single rooms and the furniture and washing spill out onto balconies. Some come to the Botanics and I watched whole families playing around in the sparse shrubs and trees. Others

were sitting quietly gazing into the calm waters of the lake. Cuba is stuck in a time warp in the middle of a cold war long abandoned elsewhere and, with Guantanamo Bay on its south-eastern tip, it is also an unwitting accomplice of a war on the other side of the globe. Soon there will be internal changes which will have social repercussions on its citizens.

I sat for a while and listened to the birds and the distant rise and fall of conversation around the lake. I find it easy to over-analyse; it is a good way of avoiding moving on or avoiding change. Perhaps the Japanese garden is just a place of quietness, that's all. Perhaps it doesn't need a reason to be there. Perhaps it just is.

*Ruth Hannah*

## *West Allendale—a poem*

1.

Familiar circle of moorland  
Falling to stone dykes  
Great field barn  
Scattered farmsteads  
Mosaic of grass and rushes

Was it a thrush  
I heard at the moor's edge  
Answering the loud curlew  
Until both were quelled  
By the storm?

Moorland colours  
Bleached by snow  
Voices of streams  
Merged with the great breath  
Sweeping the dale.

2.

What is it  
That comes thus,  
Riding the wind,  
Combing the branches,  
Scouring the heart's depths?

Shafts of sunlight,  
Wood striking wood,  
Scent of spring sap,  
Taste of fresh rain,  
Even memory is now.

In this place

At this time,  
As elsewhere and always,  
What is this  
That thus comes?

3.

When even to speak  
Is to miss the mark,  
What offering  
Can be made  
Among these hills?

Still,  
In this emptiness  
Under the scudding clouds,  
Among these lichened stones,  
And in this moment,  
Enfolding every other,  
Being is bowing.

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*West Allendale, as will be already well known to visitors to Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, is the beautiful North Pennine valley in which the Abbey is situated.*

*I first started meditation practice at Throssel, then a Priory, in February 1979 but felt neither the ability or need to find expression for this experience until the end of the Jukai sesshin in 1989 when it seemed to emerge naturally in verse form. These were published in the Journal of Throssel Hole Priory for the summer of 1995.*

*Randon Goodier, Lay Minister*

## *Faith And Trust*

I've noticed the tendency for some people coming to our Introductory sessions to be more comfortable with seeing us as a 'spiritual' rather than a 'religious' way. To put it rather crudely the distinction is usually around the idea that 'I' have a spiritual practice based on experiences as opposed to my conforming to an institution and a body of beliefs. A basic point seems to be missed here and that is that for 'my' experiences to be expressed, shared, and passed on to other generations, institutions seem to be necessary and religions are born. The other point is I think a confusion over the words 'faith' and 'belief'. There can be a blind following of doctrines that call for unquestioning belief which can leave us in a state of infantile dependency, but there can also be a faith that functions to draw us deeper into the mystery of our being. It is in this light that I'd like to quote an extract from Reverend Master Daizui's article, **What Seems Important Now**, from the Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, Autumn-Winter, 1995:-

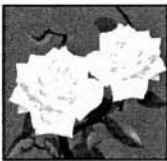
'As taking refuge in the Three Treasures defines us as Buddhists, so the act of placing trust in Something more than just our selfish selves defines our Buddhism as a religion rather than as a philosophy of life. It is possible to enter Buddhist training without any faith, to undertake Buddhist practice provisionally, and to take the Dharma as a 'working hypothesis'. Indeed I bless Buddhism for this, since this is what I did and, were it not possible, I probably would never have entered any religion as I could not stomach what I called the 'mental lobotomy' required by religions which proclaimed to me that "first you must believe". And one can go a certain distance with this experimental stance, but, after a time, one comes to a point where one can go no further: a point where it is necessary to admit that there is Something in the universe that is greater than oneself and that this Something can be trusted.

It seems that it is this very act of faith/trust in Something greater than oneself that allows for the transcendence of the self. I suspect that the reason for this may be that, at least in part, we create a sense of 'self' in the first place in order to make us feel safe and, hence, it is just too scary for most of us to let go of the illusion of a self until we have a sense that there is Something that will "catch" us when we leap into the unknown Void of No-self. Theories aside, what I have observed in myself and others is that major breakthroughs in the tyranny of self just don't happen until a solid sense of faith/trust has taken root.'

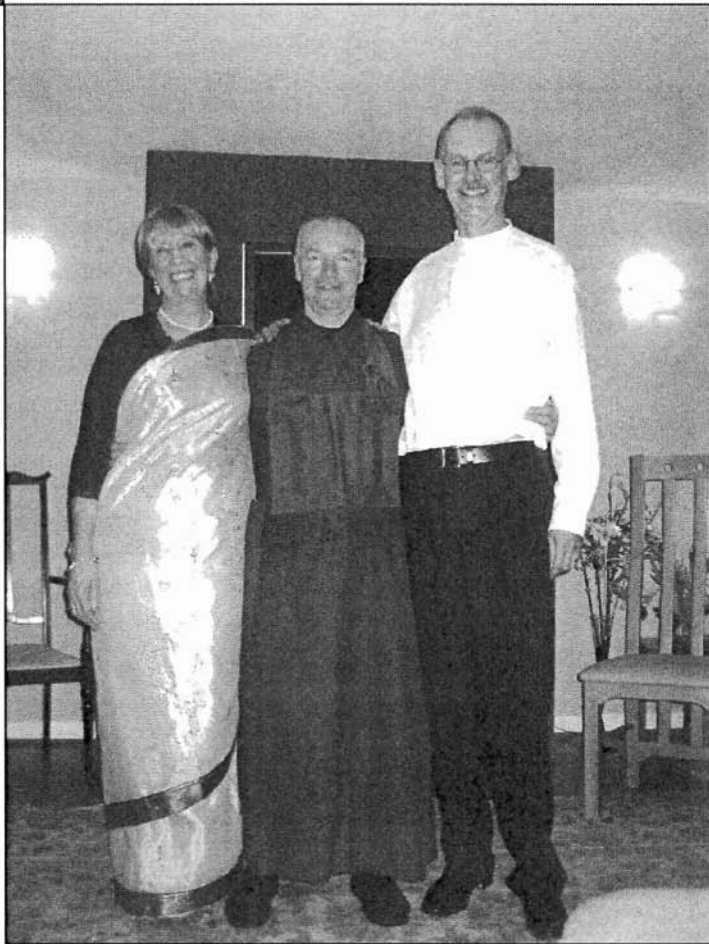
*Rev Favian*







## - *Blessing in Aberfeldy* -



**T**his is the Blessing of John Dickson and Ellie Christopher from the Aberfeldy group. Rev. Favian came up to take the service on the 2nd of February this year. We had the group involved as well as a few close friends and family, followed up by a meal which finished the evening to all our satisfaction.

Both Ellie and John felt the blessing that we had from Rev Favian set the seal on our relationship. We were very touched that he agreed to come all the way to Aberfeldy just to officiate at the service.

*John Dickson*

## Falkland Retreat

**I**t was the first time that I had been on a weekend Buddhist Retreat and I was very much looking forward to the Falkland Retreat. I came with what I thought were no expectations and an open mind and, as I was ready to relax into the weekend, I had my bag packed and organised early

to avoid any last minute rush or harassment. When I arrived at Falkland I was delighted with the beauty of the setting and was very much looking forward to the door closing behind me, to meeting new friends and leaving the hassles of every day life and the world behind me.

As the boot of the car opened for us to pick up our bags it dawned on me that I had forgotten to put my bag into the boot! I entered the peaceful retreat centre with a feeling of dread and having to make apologies for the mobile phone call I was about to make – phoning home just to make sure that it was really true. The myriad of thoughts and feelings were not at all pleasant but I tried to remind myself I had come to train with whatever was there – but I hadn't *expected* so much so soon?

It was difficult to sit in meditation being fully aware I had 'put out' one of our sangha members and also my family who were off on long drives to ensure I got my bag. After a sleepless night, the fluctuating thoughts continued into my meditations the next day but it became so natural just to sit with it all. By the Sunday morning all the chatter had ceased and there was an amazing clarity. No doubt the meditation had brought this about but the sense of community and support of the sangha, the way in which Reverend Favian lead the retreat, the profound words and refreshing silences all played their part and I am grateful for the experience.

Andrea Lawrie

*The Retreat group in the garden of Key House, in the village of Falkland, Vife*



*Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter.  
The deadline for the next issue is the end of November 2007.*





## **- Events elsewhere in Scotland with the Prior -**

### **September 2007**

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

### **October**

Friday 26th	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 27th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 28th	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm

### **November**

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

### ***For further details please phone :***

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

## — 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 and discussion.

7.00pm–8.30pm

*September 14th, October 12th, November 9th, December 14th*

### **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 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 Favian Straughan*