

# —Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*Winter frosts in Scotland*

## *Calendar of Events* January—April 2010

**Portobello Buddhist Priory**  
**27 Brighton Place, Portobello**  
**Edinburgh, EH15 1LL**  
**Telephone (0131) 669 9622**  
**email: [favian.straughan@homecall.co.uk](mailto:favian.straughan@homecall.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 -

### January 2010

Sunday 10th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
-------------	---------------------	------

### February

Sunday 7th	Festival of Buddha's Renunciation	11am
------------	-----------------------------------	------

### March

Sunday 7th	Festival of Great Master Bodhidharma	11am
------------	--------------------------------------	------

### April

Sunday 18th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
-------------	---------------------	------

**The Priory is open to visitors** as well as trainees every day from  
6.45am - 9.15pm

except Mondays, Thursday afternoons, and Sunday pm.

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

# Newsletter

no.34

December 2009

## — Prior's Notes —

**I** heard someone on the radio the other day say; "The human condition consists of spending the first half of our lives looking forward, hoping and striving for our future and the second half looking back with regret on our lost youth, hopes and dreams."

Surely too bleak a generalisation, and yet it strikes a chord in the way it points up our fixation with past and future, often at the expense of being fully present to the nature of our lives here and now.

New Year is a time when we may fall into this past/future mind set. On New Year's eve we have a Buddhist ceremony that helps us with this. Any Buddhist ceremony invites us to enter this 'now' space with body, speech and mind. The basic elements of the ceremony include bowing, offering at the altar and chanting scripture. The New Year festival ceremony begins by offering incense or lighted candles at the Founder's shrine. But the gratitude expressed to the Founder (Rev. Master Jiyu) for our training during the past year evokes a seamless connection with hers. A flow of practice which is continually renewed in the present.

The scripture we chant is The Scripture of Great Wisdom, and the scripture is 'revolved' in all directions. This, for me is a dramatic expression of the Scripture's vision of reality: a dynamic, boundless and indivisible unfolding, where all things are experienced as form-emptiness. Past and future have their place here but the scripture is always revolved from 'this place' before the altar, and 'this place' includes everything .

There is something to celebrate here and so we come together to share a sweet drink and later, festive food. We also each make a New Year's wish and strike the temple bell. Traditionally we

### **Inside this issue-**

<i>Rawdon &amp; the 25th —</i>	2
<i>Neap Tide / Night Tide</i>	4
<i>Taking your sitting place with you</i>	5
<i>History of Buddhism in Edinburgh'</i>	6
<i>The Day The World Ended</i>	10
<i>Photos from Shasta</i>	12

think of New Year's wishes asking for things like health and prosperity, words synonymous with human happiness. But the wish we make as part of our ceremony is called, "the true heart's wish" and though the form it takes will vary, in essence it is the "universe calling and the universe answering, in this very moment, in this very person. It is the great wish to train for training's sake, knowing impermanence intimately and being fully at home here.

---

## *Rawdon & the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of serene reflection meditation in Scotland -*

**I**n 1984 Rawdon Goodier was instrumental in establishing the serene reflection meditation group at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh. As noted in the last Newsletter, 2009 therefore marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of our tradition to Scotland, and with Rawdon entering his 80<sup>th</sup> year in January, this seems a fitting time to be paying tribute to his enriching contribution to the life of this sangha.

I have to declare a personal sense of gratitude, in that it was Rawdon who introduced me to the serene reflection meditation tradition and the OBC. Through a chance meeting well before the Priory was established in Portobello, he made me aware in his quietly reticent manner of the Salisbury meditation group. During a testing period in my life, the small room

at the Salisbury Centre on a Friday night became an oasis for me, and Rawdon's benign, wise and calm presence was an integral part of these evenings. In retrospect I am a little embarrassed to confess that even after the Priory was set up, it took me many months before I was willing to abandon the sanctuary of the little room and Rawdon's kindly stewardship in Salisbury for the uncharted territory of 27 Brighton Place.

Many others will feel a similar debt of gratitude. Rawdon has been a central figure in introducing our tradition to Scotland, firstly through the establishment of the Salisbury group meetings, and then in the key part he played in setting up the Priory in 1998. He was until recently a Trustee of the Priory, and his diligence and eye for detail helped to keep the affairs of the Priory in good order – one of the many quiet and unsung ways in which he

has and continues to make a contribution. In the best sense of the word, he is a patriarchal figure within our community, not least for his knowledge of the teachings.

But the respect and affection in which Rawdon is held extends beyond his influential role both within our particular tradition and wider afield in the prominent part he has played within the interfaith community and its interface with public life in Scotland.

Practice, as we all know, is neither easy nor straightforward. While there is that within us which is drawn to it, there is also that within us which just does not want to do it, and the turbulence of life can present other severe tests to our faith in practice. Given this, it's deeply important to have around us

those who are anchor points; who exemplify qualities of steadfastness, of stability, of patient tenacity and Rawdon is one of those.

Those adjectives might suggest an impassive monolith – but Rawdon is much more than that. His quiet warmth, generosity and inclusivity draw people together and generate an atmosphere of affirmation and acceptance - and his infectious snorts of laughter can be wonderfully lightening when we are at risk of becoming too serious or introverted.

We all wish him a very happy birthday, and many more to come.

*Bill Grieve*



## *Neap Tide / Night Tide*

**B**ack and forth  
We come and go  
Breathing  
In tune

With sun  
And moon  
We rise and fall

Soothed  
By the eternal  
Music  
Of salt water  
Trickling  
Through time  
Worn stones.

Above the world  
A silver censer  
Lightly hangs  
Behind  
Ink blue veils  
Fringed  
In withered gold.

Nocturnal glow  
Replaces  
Diurnal flow  
This cold night  
You fill fragrant  
With love  
Full moon.

The night tide  
Surges in,  
Ebbs away  
Tugging the earth  
Beneath our feet  
We sit to meet  
The morning star.

*David Campbell*

## *Taking your sitting place with you...*

**I**t is sometimes not easy, metaphorically speaking, to take one's sitting place with one. The pull of the world's distractions can move us away from where we sit...from the stillness within. This is never more so than when travelling and being in a strange place. New situations to deal with and new people to get to know can mean we lose our routine and, literally speaking, our sitting place.

Well, we may not be able to avoid many of the distractions that are part and parcel of travel but here is one practical way to take your sitting place with you...or at least have something to sit on. Being someone who travels a lot for work, and often not being able to find a suitable meditation seat, some years ago I decided to make my own built-to-fit mini-bench...here it is in the photos (shown next to a mobile phone to give some scale).



Its light and folds small enough to fit in a large coat pocket or in my laptop bag – it's about 30cm long by 8cm wide. The legs are hinged and chamfered at the bottom rather than the top to allow the legs to fold parallel to the seat.

When I unpack in some far off hotel I am always glad to see that my sitting place has come with me – it's like having an old friend along. I know that I will make time to use it and I am grateful for that. Being so small I wouldn't want to use it on a long retreat...but it's excellent in a sparse Balkan hotel room on a sunny autumn morning. Or on any morning come to that.

*Tim Westmoreland*



# *The history of Buddhism in Edinburgh*

## 1. Introduction

Some years ago I was encouraged to try to gather information on the development of Buddhism in Edinburgh by a short essay, prepared by the late Morton Bryce, on the history of the Edinburgh Buddhist Group. This group was the main focus of Buddhist activity in Edinburgh between 1966 and 1993. In the event it has proved quite difficult to gather sufficient information on this subject to enable a comprehensive account to be written. However I would like to offer these working notes to Edinburgh Sangha members as a tribute to the sustained commitment by Morton Bryce over many years to the establishment of Buddhism in Edinburgh and in the hope that others may be stimulated to contribute additional information.

## 2. Pre-history

It seems likely that the earliest explorations of Buddhism in Edinburgh took place under the auspices of the Theosophical Society. Thus the Orient Lodge of the Edinburgh Theosophical Society, which was founded in 1910, at its meeting at 28 Great King Street of April 1912, discussed a paper on Buddhism and afterwards listened to a reading of Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. In 1914 they presented a series of discussions on "Meditation in terms

of the Great Religious teachers".

It is recorded that the well known Zen Buddhist teacher D T Suzuki lectured on Zen Buddhism in Edinburgh in 1936 and that in 1958 he toured Edinburgh.

In the issue of the *Middle Way* (the Journal of the London Buddhist Society) for 1952-53 the announcement was made of the formation of a branch of the Buddhist Society in Edinburgh in 1952 under the presidency of a Mr W H Pass from Dunbar. Meetings were held in the Chinese Institute on George IV Bridge. In May 1953 the Edinburgh Society promoted a Wesak celebration at which "the Venerable Y Siri Nyana led Pansil and gave an address". I have found no further mention of this Group.

No further reference occurs in the *Middle Way* until the announcement of the establishment of the Edinburgh Buddhist Group under the guidance of Mr Fraser Anderson in 1966.

The years around 1950 seem to mark a transition in British Buddhism. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century most of the available translations were of the Pali scriptures and Buddhism was largely equated with the Theravadin tradition which predominated in the then Ceylon, Burma and Thailand. After 1950 the scene becomes much more diverse with the influx of teach-



ers from the Mahayana schools of Tibet, China and Japan and these turned out to contain much variety. Translation of the literature of these schools began to become available.

### **3. The Edinburgh Buddhist Group.**

As noted above this small but influential group was founded in January 1966 by Mr W Fraser Anderson and Victor Jost with meetings held weekly, firstly at Mr Andersons home on Liberton Brae then, after Mr Anderson left Scotland in 1968, in the Theosophical Society's rooms. At about this time Morton and Rose Bryce moved to Edinburgh and purchased a flat at 7 Bruntsfield Gardens where a shrine room was established which later became the focus of the Group's activities for the next fifteen years or so. Morton reported that meetings usually comprised about 6 to 8 people. No one school of Buddhism prevailed within the group but many excellent teachers from a range of traditions visited. These included the Ven Ajahn Sumedho, The Ven Sangharakshita, Sogyal Rimpoche, Ven Kalu Rimpoche, Ken and Katia Holmes from Samye Ling and Seimyo Roshi from the London Rinzai Zen Centre.

Rose and Morton Bryce considered themselves affiliated to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition but are remembered with affection, respect and gratitude by all who were helped by them to find

their own Path within Buddhism.

### **4. The 1970's**

The 1970's saw the beginning of a broadening of Buddhist Activities in Scotland generally, probably stimulated in part by the foundation of the Samye Ling Tibetan Temple near Langholm in 1968 and by the founding of Throssel Hole Zen Buddhist Priory just south of the border near Hexham. Teachers from Samye Ling became frequent visitors to the Edinburgh Buddhist Group. My first record of the visit of a Zen Buddhist teacher to Edinburgh (other than DT Suzuki) is that of Rev Daiji Strathearn, one of the founders of Throssel Hole Priory, who gave a talk on zen practice at the Salisbury Centre in September 1975.

Ajahn Cha, the highly respected and influential Thervadin teacher from Thailand, visited Edinburgh in May 1979 in company with Ajahn Sumedho and other monks. Later in the same year Ajahn Sumedho revisited Scotland to lead a ten day retreat at Oban and also gave a talk at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh.

### **5. The 1980's**

The 1980's a significant expansion of Buddhist activity took place in Edinburgh. Local meditation groups affiliated to the main traditions began to be established. The founding of a branch

monastery under the direction of Ajahn Sumedho of the Forest Sangha tradition at Harnham in Northumberland in 1981 enabled the Edinburgh Theravadin Group to evolve a few years later. Others included the Samye Dzong Group (affiliated to Samye Ling) , the Dharma Study group (following the teachings of Chogyam Trungpa) , and the Soto Zen Group (affiliated to Throssel Hole Priory) in October 1984. 1984 was also marked by the occasion of the first visit of the Dalai Lama to Edinburgh. In April 89 Nan Shin, one of Taizen Deshimaru's disciples, led a short zen retreat at the Salisbury Centre but the meditation group affiliated with that tradition moved to Glasgow.

A University of Edinburgh Buddhist Society was formed in November 1983 and between then and May 88, energetically supported by Eric Taylor, promoted at least 34 lectures by distinguished Buddhist speakers including: Trevor Leggett, Anandamaitreya, Dhiravamsa, Tew Bunnag, Khentin Tai Situpa, Ngakpa Jampa Thaya, Ajahn Sumedho (Abbot of the Amaravati Buddhist monastery.) Rev Master Daishin Morgan (the Abbot of Throssel Hole Priory), and Lama Yeshe, the Abbot of Samye Ling.

After 1988 the existence of the University Society became rather intermittent and I have no further record of talks held under its auspices. However the healthy flow of communications

between the various traditions represented in Edinburgh groups, previously encouraged through the University Society events, continued from 1984 to the present day by the establishment of an annual Buddha Day gathering. Normally held at the Salisbury Centre on a Sunday in May, this event includes a puja led by one of the Buddhist groups, and a sharing of news and food.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order did not become continuously active in Edinburgh until Order members Tejamitra and Agracitta moved across from Glasgow in 1986.

## 6. The 1990's

The 1990's seem to have been a decade of consolidation during which several important new meditation groups were formed. These included the Rigpa Group ( following the teachings of the teacher Sogyal Rimpoche), the New Kadampa Tradition and the Edinburgh Community of Interbeing. The latter group was initiated by Ani Mavericka, stimulated by a visit in the early 90's to the Plum Village retreat centre of the Vietnamese Zen teacher (Thich Nhat Hanh – "Thay"). By 1995 weekly meetings were being held at the Gillis Centre in Edinburgh. In 1998 several associated Interbeing sanghas had formed across Scotland, collectively known as the Wild Geese Scottish Sangha.. In 1994 the FWBO ob-

tained the lease of a large house in Grange road where they were able to promote a wide range of activities until the lease had to be given up in 1999.

The Soto Zen Group affiliated to Throssel Hole Priory, after having been based at the Salisbury Centre for 14 years, finally achieved the establishment of Portobello Buddhist Priory with a resident senior monk in September 1998.

## 7. The Present Decade.

The present decade has so far been marked by a number of notable events and involvements. In 2003 the Wild Goose Sangha arranged for Thay and 20 monastics from Plum Village to lead a 5 day retreat at St Andrews followed by a peace walk in Edinburgh. 2005 saw the second visit of the Dalai Lama. Ringu Tulku Rinpoche continues to make his annual visit to Edinburgh to give teachings which are much appreciated by most Buddhist schools. In 1998 a group of mainly East Asian students in the University started to meet together and in 2002 formally constituted themselves as the University of Edinburgh Buddhist Society, later changing their name to the "Edinburgh Asian Dharma Society". Group practice on Friday evenings generally includes traditional chants and dharma talks by group members.

The decade has also seen closer relationships developing between Bud-

dhist Groups in Edinburgh. The annual meeting of groups in the Salisbury Centre, started in 1984, has continued and been augmented by an annual joint weekend retreat. A "Sangha without Boundaries" newsletter was initiated in June 06. Edinburgh Buddhists have actively participated in the Edinburgh Inter Faith Association and the Scottish Inter Faith Council and have been requested on several occasions to lead the "Time for Reflection" which initiates the sessions of the Scottish Parliament. A Thai Buddhist Temple was established in Slateford Road in 2005 and the FWBO, having occupied temporary leased premises in Viewforth for five years, achieved their own centre on Melville Terrace, overlooking the Meadows, in June 2006. In the autumn of 2009 Kagyu Samye Dzong Edinburgh purchased a property in Walker Street to serve as their meditation centre in Edinburgh's New Town.

*Rawdon Goodier*

Originally published in installments in "Sangha Without Boundaries: The Newsletter of Edinburgh's Buddhist Communities" 2006 – 2007. Revised December 2009.

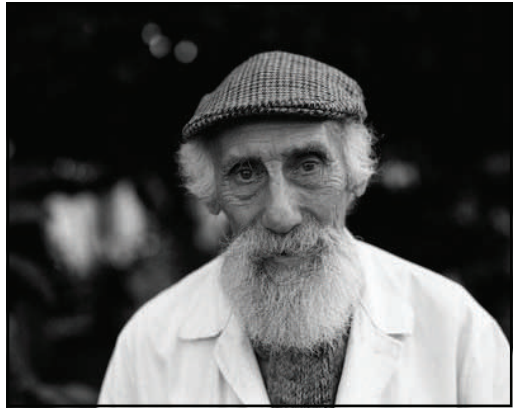


## *The Day The World Ended —*

**T**he poem opposite is by an American called Robert Lax who lived a largely obscure and simple life on Patmos in Greece. He is one of a number of poets recently celebrated by The Poetry Library in the High St, and other centres round Edinburgh, known as Concrete poets. Lax always felt he made poems rather than wrote them and nearly all his late work follows a vertical elongated structure in order to bring the reader into the deepest possible connection with the words. We are forced to read slowly and deliberately.

Lax was the close friend of the famous Trappist monk and author, Thomas Merton who brought an awareness of Zen to western contemplatives in the 1960's when few had really heard of it or if they had they dismissed it as a branch of oriental quietism. Lax's work is definitely western but in its concentration on the small moment, the movement, the thing in itself it is very Zen and not unlike the way Zen works in its efforts to

enlighten us. Lax wants us to experience a simple moment, to join the potter in his journey, well the end of his journey, and imagine how much living in the present he must have done to continue sitting and making his pot while the world ended. This spirit of presence and attention to what it is necessary to do feels very Zen to me.



*Robert Lax, who died in 2000*

*Benet Haughton*

The  
day  
the  
world  
en  
ded

he  
was  
work  
ing  
on  
a  
pot

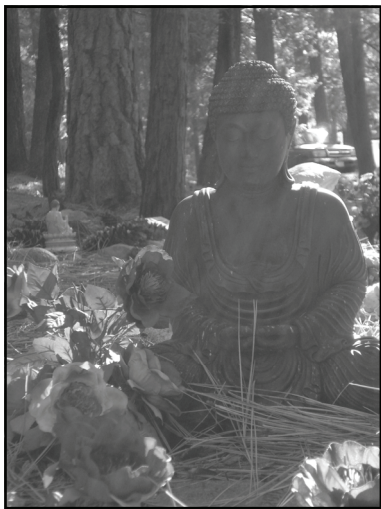
he  
had  
fin  
ish  
'd  
the  
pot

and  
was  
work  
ing  
on  
the  
han  
dle

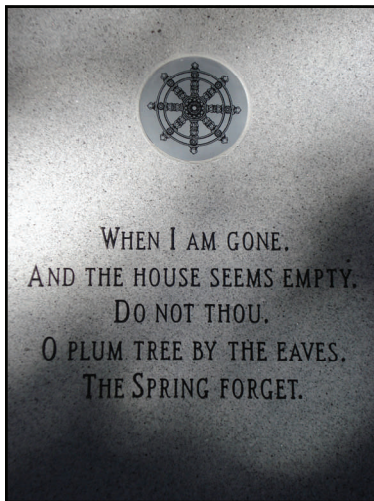
and  
when  
the  
world  
end  
ed

he  
had  
al  
most  
fin  
ish  
'd  
the  
han  
dle

*Some recent photos from Shasta Abbey —*



*The animal graveyard*



*Rev Master Jiyu's Memorial Poem*



*Mount Shasta*

*photographs  
by  
Naomi  
Healey-  
Cathcart*



*Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter.  
Deadline for next issue is the end of March 2010.*





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

### **February 2010**

Friday 19th	Aberfeldy group evening	6.30-9.30pm
Saturday 21st	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 22nd	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm

### **March**

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

### **April**

Friday 16th	Aberfeldy group evening	7.30-9pm
Saturday 17th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 18th	Aberdeen Day Retreat	10am-4pm

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

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



# — 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**

Will be held on the second Saturday of each month. A short talk about Buddhist practice and the Serene Reflection Meditation (Soto Zen) tradition.  
Meditation instruction and discussion.

*Saturday 9th January, 13th February, 13th March, 10th 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 Favian Straughan*