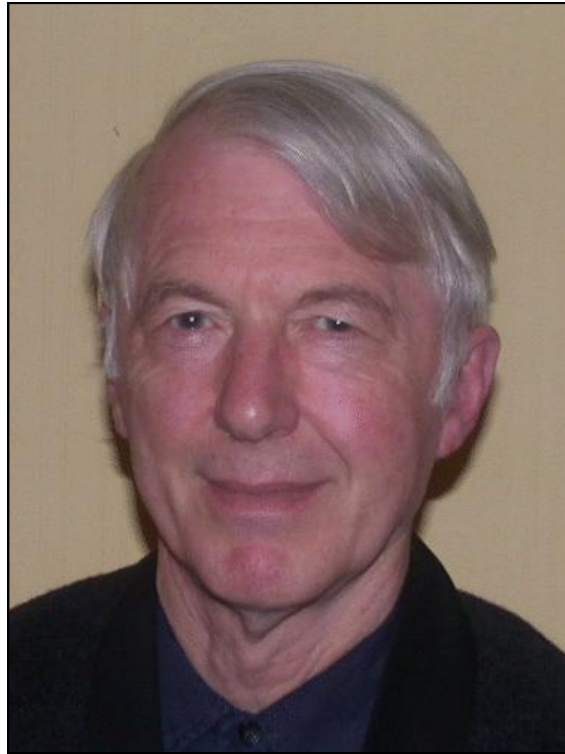


# —*Portobello Buddhist Priory*—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*In Memory of  
Rawdon Goodier  
1931—2018*

February 2018

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*Special edition of the Portobello Priory Newsletter  
in memory of Rawdon Goodier, Lay Minister  
February 2018*

*Notes on Rawdon's life compiled by his family  
for his funeral on 20th January, 2018*

**R**awdon was born in Upminster, Essex, the only child of Grace and Rawdon Snr. Outdoor pursuits featured strongly in his childhood - he spoke of building a tree house and skating on the frozen lake in what was then an almost rural environment. Rawdon also made a lifelong friend in Alan Corbett, who he would continue to visit until they were both in their 80's.

An academically gifted child, Rawdon gained a scholarship to study at Brentwood School. He was a keen participant in sports and outdoor activities, captaining the school rugby team and also a very strong middle distance and cross country runner. At Brentwood Rawdon fostered his lifelong interests in science and nature which he further pursued at University College London, taking an Honours degree in Zoology.

Rawdon exuded a form of coolness which his children would later find hard to explain - he rode around London on a Lambretta and wore a 'fishtail' Parker coat over a decade before the Mod fashion revolution! It was also during his student days that Rawdon first encountered Western Buddhism and began his lifelong study and practice. Always an adventurer, as a student, Rawdon cycled around Ireland, his photographs capturing both its natural beauty and political complexity. He was an avid photographer, starting with a box brownie and later purchasing his first Leica and Rolliflex cameras.

During his Military service, Rawdon followed his father into Royal Marines. After basic and officer training, his time with the cliff assault wing allowed

rock climbing on sea cliffs in Cornwall, a continuation of his undergraduate mountaineering passion. In 1955 Rawdon was an early pioneer of cliff climbing routes near Bosigran with fellow marine John 'Zeke' Deacon. 'Raven Wall', is still regarded as one of Bosigran's extreme test pieces. 'String of pearls' was another of Rawdon's favourites - a name inspired by the linkage of several routes in this traversing climb. Clearly recognised as an academic and referred to by his fellow marines as 'the professor', Rawdon later told of his marine adventures including the time when the group went adder hunting on Dartmoor after a visit of the local hostelry! Climbing and mountaineering became another of Rawdon's lifelong pursuits. He was a member of the Climbing Club and was highly regarded amongst the UK-climbing community. An experienced alpine mountaineer in his early years, this pursuit continued in later life. In 1983 Rawdon was a member of an expedition to the Andes with his former marine commander Mike Banks, Mike and Sally Westmacott and Sir John and Joy Hunt, reaching heights of over 19,000 feet on Jontunhuman<sup>3</sup>. In 1955 Rawdon obtained his first job working in Africa for the then Southern Rhodesian Government's Tsetse fly control programme. In addition to his disease vector control duties, Rawdon was a keen botanist and ecologist. He spent a great deal of time with his colleague Jim Phipps exploring remote regions, including studying the ecology and geology of the Chimanimani mountain range and cataloguing its unique and diverse flora and fauna. Very recently, Rawdon was happily communicating with a research team at Kew about his and Jim's work which was much quoted in a recent report - a testimony to the lasting impact of this work. It was also in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) that Rawdon developed further a musical ear, building up his record collection and listening to new repertoire with Jim and his good friend Rhys Lewis. Rawdon's lifelong love of classical music was passed on to his family. Music was a constant feature of the Goodier household and was always played with sufficient volume to reverberate throughout the house.

Rawdon took a sabbatical back in the UK in 1958/59, studying for a postgraduate diploma in applied parasitology and entomology at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. It was during a return visit to his parents, now living in Cheshire, that Rawdon met and became engaged to Judy who was at that time training to be a teacher. Judy later joined Rawdon in Africa. A bit of an action man to be honest - Rawdon saved Judy from a puff adder in the nick of time and prevented a rampaging

Elephant from destroying a local village. Many of these tales remain with us, including the one where their resident Galago (bushbaby) came crashing down from the rafters after sampling some gin & orange! Rawdon and Judys' first son Mark was born in Zimbabwe after which they returned to live in the UK.

Rawdon pursued his love of nature and commitment to protecting the environment taking up a post as regional officer for the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) in North Wales. The family home was in Llanfairfechan a rural village not far from Bangor and the coast. It was here that Martin and Anthony were born and the three children were introduced at an early age to the wonders of walking in the local hills with their parents and grandparents and roaming free in the local countryside. It was with the NCC that Rawdon took the opportunity to move to Scotland, taking up his post as a regional officer based in Edinburgh in 1969. Rawdon continued to work tirelessly on protecting the environment, negotiating complex protections in many regions, including the Cairngorms. In the late 1970s Rawdon's skills were tested on an international level, now working for the Scottish Office where he was involved in negotiations on Biosphere reserves with the then Soviet Union.

Rawdon's love of nature and spirit of adventure combined in inspiring family holidays in Cornwall, Ireland and the Orkney Islands. Most notably, in 1972 Rawdon took the family on a three month tour of nature reserves throughout Northern and Southern Europe, a journey of some 7,000 miles in a campervan, for which he received a Churchill Fellowship.

Rawdon was an avid reader and could often be found in the second-hand bookshop on Causwayside, in Edinburgh seeking out philosophical or scientific tomes but also reading the odd novel! Aside from his scientific and report writing Rawdon also contributed to popular books, most notably his 1990 collaboration with the photographer Colin Baxter, writing the descriptive prose for 'The Cairngorms: The Nature of The Land'.

A committed practitioner of Buddhism, Rawdon regularly went on retreat at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in Northumbria, meditated at the Edinburgh Salisbury centre and later helped to found the Portobello Buddhist Priory where he was a lay

Zen Buddhist Minister. He continued to practice at the priory until very recently. Rawdon was the first chairperson of Scottish Inter Faith Council (former name of Interfaith Scotland) and has supported interfaith work faithfully for many years.

Rawdon was a lifelong devotee of nature and philosophy, but above all he was a dedicated husband and father who always found time for his family (despite the boys being 'challenging' at times). He is sadly missed by Judy, 'the three boys' and their families and children.



*Rawdon's poem 'Wolfcleugh'*

*with his explanatory notes —*

1.  
A shallow trough leaving the moor  
Then, suddenly,  
A steep sided cleft, ferny,  
With pools among stones  
Under the old hidden willow.

Lower, a steep rock step  
In shade near the shrine,  
Where autumn's dripping moss  
Becomes a winter torrent  
Into the deep cleugh  
Beneath tall trees where,  
In spring, wild garlic blooms.

2.  
Sitting,  
Within the music of the stream,  
Surge, eddy and vortex,  
A symphony of ceaseless,  
Yet not restless, movement.  
Bedrock incised, mind penetrated.

3.  
And finding here an empathy with,  
Yet beyond, this place,  
A boundless gratitude  
For forms to celebrate,  
Not merely scenery  
But, in the flow of seasons  
And of years,  
A geography of the heart.

Wolfcleugh – a steep, mainly wooded, ravine forming a dominant feature of the grounds of Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey. I recently discovered that the definition of *cleugh* found in the larger OED is accompanied by two examples, one of which is *Wolfcleugh* ! It is the only location of that name to be found in Google Maps.

*Randon Goodier*  
*June 2007*



## *The most important question for Buddhists —*

*(This is the transcription of a talk given by Rev. Leandra at Throssel Hole Abbey. We are very grateful to her for allowing it to be printed in this memorial edition of the Newsletter.)*

*'The most important question for all Buddhists is how to understand birth and death completely. For then, should you be able to find the Buddha within birth and death, they both vanish' - The Shushogi*

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**Q**uestions that arise for me at Segaki are: **who or what are the dead?** Am I alive or dead? Segaki prompts us to find out for ourselves what lies beyond the walls of our ideas about life and death; beyond the mental constructs of a self that is born and dies.

A helpful pointer is to investigate the formlessness upon which form depends. Looking into consciousness by which we define ourselves, you find nothing lasts very long. There is nothing permanent, nothing that is not already dying. Every experience is impermanent. And there is the unchanging spaciousness within which the Absolute or the ground of our being is truly alive. This is the unchanging 'I' which is not a concrete being in the sense of being this, or of being that. It is Thus-ness; pure awareness before consciousness begins to stir. Thus-ness is neither coming nor going. It is neither created nor destroyed. It is neither moving nor still. So what is Thus-ness?

I don't know. What helps me on this journey of life and death is to treasure being rather than becoming; and so to rest at ease in my not knowing.

How then can we awaken to the deeper timeless reality that lies beyond birth and death? Having faith in zazen will guide us into the unknowing. Zazen teaches us how to align ourselves with true nature. In zazen we are learning to turn the mind that bubbles up with thoughts to investigating instead what mind is. The mind can be used to keep digging up its seeming ground from under its feet. It can keep undermining its previous positions in search of clarity. Its



questions are turned back upon the very assumptions that have given rise to the questions. The mind can dismantle its own belief systems, or at least put them into perspective. And it's indeed well placed to do so, for it created them in the first place.

What a gift the human capacity to reflect upon itself is. We realise that we are being born and dying in each moment of zazen. When we see the dissolution and death of the thought-world, what then follows is the choice as to whether to recreate and re-enter the same thought-world; or maybe a different one. Or we can choose to dwell in the spaciousness of non-thinking. This is our true essence.

Like some vast and almost unbearably brilliant splendour which can make us shrink away, and choose instead the cosiness of our limited sense of self with which we are familiar.

So view the inevitability of death as a good omen for it strips away the possibility of hiding from the reality of impermanence in the deceptive safety and comfort of our make-believe world, which you want never to come to an end.

When our hungry ghost nature is in the ascendant, letting go of our fantasy world can feel nigh impossible. However, even the slightest movement away from dwelling in our greed and fear directs us towards being in tune with impermanence, with the impermanence of our body and our ever-changing mind. There, even impermanence falls away. What a conundrum for the mind if even impermanence is nothing more than a construct the mind has fabricated.

Only in letting go of knowing can we catch the shimmering glimpse of what remains when all constructs have fallen away. It is sometimes called the Deathless; the Unborn, the Undying. Our essential nature that never dies. The realm where the mind originally does not abide.

Through trusting zazen we come to let go of the false sense of a separate self that needs to be defended to avoid destruction; and instead face the uncertainty and panic that can be engendered by the sense of no solid ground to stand on. Looking without turning away, we find an increasing confidence growing in

what for now it is to be human, to be this particular human being, in this particular place in the world.

We can rely more and more on a fundamental confidence in our true nature that is beyond personality or role. We begin to know with a knowing that is wordless; a knowing that resides at the core of our being. Our true nature is not born; neither does it die.

Still we may object: but – but – surely there is a self in time, a one who is born and dies. If this is not so, then what is life?

Turn again to what zazen points us to; and we will begin to realise that to understand birth and death completely is to utterly accept the presence of birth and death, for then they both vanish. When we surrender to the reality of birth and death, we allow the possibility of a constant dying into a deeper life, and we can at any moment be in balance with that which is not born and does not die.

As RM Daishin wrote in ‘Buddha Recognises Buddha’, death is something more than annihilation. In zazen there is no permanent self, and no annihilation. There is life. That life doesn’t look forward to anything, or backward to anything. Then we’re beginning to know in a way that cannot be expressed by the analytic mind, what the nature of birth and death is.

We come to sense that birth and death are just appearances within reality, like images in a mirror. This does not mean we can ignore impermanence: impermanence is reality. When we utterly accept impermanence and give up fantasies of escaping old age, disease and death, we come to deeply know eternal life. We don’t have to escape from impermanence to find eternity.

So zazen could be described as a practice of dying, of letting go into the vast unknowing. Only that which can be named dies. The truth is a mystery wherein everything is held without beginning or end. So let go of your knowing, and let go of your unknowing. Let go of your intellectual understanding. Ultimately, all understandings must be transcended and dispensed with. All teachings are knots that must be untied.

In letting go of our storyline we can look back on life with equanimity and a sense of completeness. Whose life was it anyway? I find the words from the

obituary for Rev Master Jiyu were helpful. Here they are:

*She stepped off into death because it was time to die. It was as she had wanted; as if she had stepped out through a door. Not an ending; not even a new beginning; just a going on, going on, going on beyond.*

Intuitively we sense that there must be more to what a person is than the vanished event. Zazen is the process of discovering what that more is. The ache in the heart in response to someone we love dying is the essence of the heart beyond pleasure and pain. Don't deny the ache: don't pretend to be braver than you are. Turn towards the grief. The heart cannot be destroyed by grief.

Turning towards encourages us to face death, ours and other people's with dignity and courage. If we're trapped in the hungry ghost realm, turning towards what we are afraid of and causes us to feel pain can seem nigh impossible. But when we do face the fear we find there is dignity and courage in all beings, including ourselves.

The deeper we go in meditation, the less definable we become. The Scripture of Great Wisdom says: all things are neither born, nor do they die. In spite of that, we see life passing by. It helps me to ask the question: am I dead or alive? For this breaks the dreamlike quality of a half-attended life, and I can then enter the aspects of my life that remain unlived because I've been trapped in the hungry ghost realm of feeling it is not enough.

If we're seldom fully present, we're more likely to be thinking our lives than living them directly. My advice to myself is to live well in this moment. Live as if this moment was all that was allotted. The closer our awareness is to the present moment, the closer we are to our timeless essence.

And then, where is suffering to be found? Everything takes care of itself with unexpected grace.



## *Rawdon—an appreciation*

*(Brief eulogy given by Willie Grieve at Rawdon's funeral. Willie is a sangha member and was a personal friend of Rawdon.)*

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**I'd like to say some words in deep appreciation of the role Rawdon played in helping to bring our particular Buddhist tradition to Scotland, and to express our gratitude to him for his enriching contribution to the life of our Buddhist community here in Scotland.**

34 years ago, in 1984, Rawdon played the leading part in establishing the serene reflection meditation group at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh which was the first step on the road towards the Priory which we're now very fortunate in having.

I have to declare a personal sense of gratitude, in that it was Rawdon who introduced me to this tradition and the *Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*. 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. He'd been within earshot when I had been holding forth to friends at a party about what Buddhism really meant (on the basis, of course, of reading a book about it, or more probably, part of a book). In that delicately oblique way of his, he very gently corrected some of my wilder misunderstandings, and no doubt noticing my flush of embarrassment, courteously extended an invitation to me, should I be so inclined, to come along to try meditation.

During a testing period in my life, that small room in 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'm 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 that little room and Rawdon's kindly stewardship in Salisbury for the uncharted territory of 27 Brighton Place in Portobello.

Many others will feel a similar debt of gratitude. Rawdon has been a central figure in introducing our tradition to Scotland, firstly through the Salisbury centre, and then in the key part he played in setting up the Priory in 1998, 20 years ago. For some years he was 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 his many quiet and unsung contributions, including being a prison chaplain under the Angulimala scheme. He was a lay minister for many years, which entailed him carrying out religious duties within our Order; and he had the rare honour of receiving a brown kesa in recognition of the depth of his training. 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 has been held extends beyond his influential role both within our particular tradition and wider afield in the prominent part he played within the interfaith community and its interface with public life in Scotland.

Buddhist practice is neither easy nor straightforward. While there's that within us which is drawn to it, there is also that within us which just doesn't 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 has been one of those to us.

Those adjectives might suggest a rather impassive monolithic figure – but Rawdon was much, much more than that. His quiet warmth & kindness, his generosity and inclusivity drew people together and generated an atmosphere of affirmation and acceptance - and his infectious snorts of laughter could be wonderfully lightening when we were at risk of taking ourselves too seriously or becoming too introverted.

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His was a life well-lived and generously given; and we have the deepest sense of gratitude to him for it.

## The Gandavyuha Sutra —

*During his life Rawdon undertook a rendering of this Sutra in verse form. The Sutra records a celebrated spiritual pilgrimage in which Sudhana embarks on a quest for the ultimate truth.*

*Below appears Rawdon's version of the Avalokitesvara section of the Sutra. This was read over his body at his private funeral at the hospital where he died.*

1.

### **R**ecalling the procession

#### **O**f my spiritual guides,

Realising the continued power  
And perfect teaching  
Of the Buddhas,  
I made my way to Mount Potalaka.

The mountain wore its forests  
Like a splendid robe.  
Tall trees gave shade and shelter  
As I climbed but made me fear  
That I might lose my way  
Among the subtle tracks.  
Then, high on the western slopes,  
I came upon a grassy space  
Among the trees,  
Adorned with tranquil ponds  
Fed by cool streams.  
And there, upon a rock,  
Sat he I sought, speaking  
Of compassion's radiance  
To a bodhisattva throng.

I beheld him with joy,  
Filled with faith  
In his beneficence

And, approaching,  
I once again announced my

quest  
And asked him to describe to me  
The practice of enlightening ones.

2.

"Welcome" he said  
"You who have embarked  
On the Great Vehicle,  
Your aspiration is wonderful.  
Filled with the energy  
Of great compassion,  
Seeking to save all beings  
From their deeply rooted miseries,  
Intent on realising  
The purity of great vows,  
Born from the wisdom of  
Manjusi,  
Welcome"

"My practice is that  
Of instant compassion,  
Exercised without delay,  
Through beneficence and cooperation  
In the midst of sentient beings,  
Yet leaving not the Buddha's realm.  
Causing my name and gift  
To be known among all

That suffer in the worldly toil.

From care and trouble  
Those who call my name  
Will be released.  
Those imprisoned  
By an enemies hand,  
Bound in chains,  
If they call upon my name  
Will find their fetters  
Set them free.

Those with my name at heart  
Go without fear  
Among all dangers,  
No enemy overcoming them,  
And find liberation  
Among the worst  
That can befall.

By this and other means  
I guide all beings in the world.  
But I cannot give word  
To all the virtues  
Of all enlightening ones.  
Go on and seek  
What they themselves can tell.

