

—Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



Priory Altar for Memorial Ceremony for Ukraine

Newsletter May—August 2022

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Newsletter

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Please Note: this issue of our Newsletter doesn't yet contain a schedule of events due to continuing uncertainty about Covid-19. However, the Priory opened again on Sunday 24th April for meditation and ceremony. As infection rates are still high, it seems good to continue restricting our numbers to six for now, so please book in as usual. Mask wearing is optional at any point and there's no requirement to test before coming, although of course if you have any symptoms please don't attend.

Until further notice, there will be no group visits around Scotland by the Prior due to RM Favian's health condition.

We'll continue coming together for meditation, dharma and ceremony on the Zoom platform each week, and will review arrangements in the light of developing circumstances. Again, please consult the Priory website for the most up to date information.

— *Prior's Notes* —

Standing at the Edge: the dynamic nature of Zazen

Let's set the scene with some affirmations: Our True Nature is the home ground of everything that is. Where ever we turn, there we are; but in order to know this, we have to be willing to face into the unknown. Thought can't go there, as it moves in time. The timeless dimension is right here and now where awakening redeems us from the separate 'me' identifications. Questioning 'what is this' brings us to the unknown. The challenge is to stay present right on the edge between the known and the unknown and not run away.

We may discover that something emerges and knows itself as us; this, that is awake right now. The scriptural line: 'The snowy heron in the bright moon

hides', speaks to this.

We tend to become identified with the objects of mind and forget their source. So we can ask 'what is this?' and let this energy of enquiry lead us back to the source. In this enquiry we are learning to: 'walk on the surface of the ocean as well as the ocean floor'. This depth of being isn't born and doesn't die. It is acceptance and non judgement, and it cannot be threatened by any experience. It stands as the background awareness to our lives and the foreground intimacy with the present moment of experiencing.

Having heard this affirmation of the deep sufficiency of existence, let us turn to the Sitting.

The invitation here is to become present, no past and future grasping of mind, just this right now. Be present with an open mind and body so that awareness can move through the various layers of our identity: through the energy of thought, through the areas of feeling and tension in the body. Then let the attention sink below identification with thought and feeling. What is noticing this movement of attention? So we are taking off our conceptual clothing and standing free as the aliveness of being: moving through the mind/body identifications, the labels of name and form, our roles in life, our job, our gender, race, likes and dislikes; until perhaps we may come to a sense of just: 'I am'. Now can we drop even the 'I am', letting ourselves move to the edge of the mind's familiar territory, the edge of where it seems able to go, and so now is available to the unknown, that is nevertheless, sensed as presence.

Buddhism tells us we are this presence that is awake and aware, and boundless. As one Zen Master puts it: 'Leap into the boundless and make it your home'. We can learn to look and feel and think without leaving this: 'home ground'. When the strength of present moment awareness becomes stronger than our identification with separating thoughts, we can intuit we always share in this undivided nature, the 'One Bright Pearl'.

Through this release into our True Nature, whatever thoughts and feelings,

fears and desires that may arise, can do so, like the heron in the bright moon, emerging from this background of completeness, neither judged or rejected. Because now identifications have been seen through, we don't have to experience and suffer ourselves as fundamentally fractured beings. So everything can be investigated with, 'what is this.' Awareness can move through this body and mind, the thoughts and feelings, as this dynamic Truth seeking movement we call *Zazen*.



A Comfort Break

In the small village of East Haven on the Angus coast there is a public toilet. It is open between October and May and is cared for voluntarily by the local community. East Haven is a remarkable place with a long history, dating back to 1214 and a rich array of ongoing community activities. (Look it up online - it has a great website.)

When cycling along Sustrans route 1 last year, in need of spending a penny, we were delighted to discover this wee gem of a facility. Yesterday, on a trip along the coast, we paid another visit.

So why, you may ask, have I chosen to tell you about a public convenience?

Well, on our visit there yesterday, I came away feeling moved by the comfort this place had given me

It is an ordinary toilet block with several cubicles for ladies and gents. It is clean, with soap, and handtowels to wash. It is free, though a donations box sits on the wall. Surrounding the donations box is a display of art showing local scenes and some of the plant, animal, bird and insects species living in the important ecosystem of the sur-

rounding dunes and coast. The building itself feels like a place to linger.

The community of people providing this welcome facility was faceless and nameless to me at the time (though I have since seen some of them on the website.) I was moved by their generosity. They were giving their time and effort to ensure the availability of clean loos. They were also displaying a generosity of spirit. Committing, voluntarily, to keep clean a public toilet for unknown visitors is not an everyday occurrence. It represents an openness, trust and optimism about the world on two legs who will appear, "needing to go." It recognises that we all share the same basic physical needs and appreciate having them met. It is a simple demonstration of humanity recognising humanity and giving what can be given to make others more comfortable. Sitting there, I was smiling. I was not thinking, wondering, analysing, questioning. There was simply gratitude for the gift of comfort given.

This morning I woke up and, after a

cup of tea, I meditated before doing anything else, which is unusual for me. I'm fairly certain this was my "thank you".

Jane Stephen



The volunteer toilet cleaners -

News from Fedor -

Have felt very guilty at not contributing to the Newsletter for ages.

So, all that comes up are fairly random thoughts, was saying the five thoughts to myself the other morning before diving into my porridge and remembered a morning many years ago. I did the same thing whilst breakfasting with my then 4 year old twin daughters, being closely copied when raising the bowl in offering, they managed to tip most of their cereal over their heads.

Have been reading Rev.Master Leandra's 'Birth and Death', what a gem and inspiration, and so full of plain good sense, excellent, everyone should have a copy.

We are off on a bike trip through France tomorrow and I thought I might send this whilst underway, however think that I won't come up with any earth shattering wisdom after a day of pedalling. It should be a good time to practice cycling meditation though!

We will be away for a couple of months and have left the house being house-sat by 3 Ukrainian refugees, a lovely mother and her 18 year old son, and another woman, a work colleague, all of them an inspiration of hope in their positive attitude, after the grim situation they have found themselves in.

That's about it, must away and pack my panniers, and be more minimalist, taking only what I need and not what I want. If I don't, the Karma will catch up with me on the hills!

Fedor Bunge

Milarepa's Jug

Long before I had any personal experience of Buddhism, I read a story of how Milarepa lived for years as a hermit in a cave on a mountain in Tibet. His only worldly possession was a pottery jug that he used for fetching water from a spring. One day this jug broke, and he got on his knees in gratitude to it for giving him a lesson in attachment and impermanence. I have always remembered this story- I even remembered Milarepa's name. The story resonates for me.

The last time I stayed at Throssel was in October 2019 for the week-long Segaki Retreat. At Working Meditation I was asked to sharpen all the knives in the kitchen. Anyone who has worked in the kitchen will know that there are a *lot* of knives! It is the kind of practical job that I really enjoy doing and it was fortunate that I happened to have brought some of my diamond sharpening tools with me. Rev Olwen arranged for me to use a table in the corner, which I set up as a 'sharpening station' and there I sat each morning while I took time with each knife. A slow, meticulous job which gave me time to observe how my mind sneakily used this as an attempt to falsely elevate myself above others, by trying to view my position as 'promotion' over the other people who were asked to 'merely' work at the actual food preparation.

7th Precept: *I intend to train myself not to be proud of myself and devalue others.*

I was also asked to attend to various other small repair jobs in the kitchen, including mending the handle of a very small decorative jug. A previous attempt to glue it had proved unsuccessful. This is the sort of job I love; meticulously scraping off the remains of the glue (and observing my judgemental mind that whoever had made the previous attempt had not done it adequately! 7th Precept again). I went to the workroom and found two wizened tubes of Araldite, some rags and masking tape and prepared to do the actual gluing during the follow-

ing mornings Working Meditation period. I approached the task in a careful and methodical manner, mixed up the epoxy, applied it sparingly and held it all in place with masking tape. I continued with other tasks while waiting for signs of the glue hardening. But it showed no signs of this, so I took it through to the boiler room, which is always cosy, trusting that the heat would hasten its hardening process. I looked at it after lunch and in the evening, but it remained like gooey honey.

Araldite comes in two tubes that you have to mix to activate. One tube is the adhesive and the other is the hardener. All became clear the next morning when I eventually noticed that I had mistakenly chosen and mixed two tubes of hardener. I located a tube of adhesive in the workroom and then had to remove yesterday's gooey hardener and repeat the process of gluing the handle. 'Take two' went well, the glue dried and I scraped off the surplus, leading to a repair which was hardly visible and I was pleased (yes *proud*) of the result.

While I was doing this repair, I referred to it as *Milarepa's Jug* when talking to Rev Olwen, and I told her the story which she had never heard. The day after returning home I wrote her this letter:

Milarepa's Jug once again re- manifests itself.

Dear Rev Olwen,
Oct 27th 2019

I set off at midday yesterday- lovely sunny weather heading towards Carlisle and thence up the M6 and off at Moffat to take The Devil's Beeftub route to Peebles. Six miles from our home is Stobo Kirk, where my first wife Sharon is buried. There is a little Buddha sitting in front of her gravestone and beneath it is a pile of pebbles that I have brought her from all over the world. My little offerings to her memory- presents

that should last for millions of year. Other people seem to have added to it... there is also a mini pottery hedgehog that I certainly never put there. But it was me that, many years ago, added a minute pottery jug made by a potter friend. It is about 1½ inches high.

The weather had turned a bit nasty when I arrived at the Kirk, but I had brought her a pebble from Throssel and one from Laurieston Hall and several from Armenia when I had visited our son in April. I had not been for quite a few months so I was determined to visit her grave. It seemed an auspicious time to visit, right after Segaki.



And when I finally made it up the steepish path to her grave on the hill on the Kirk, what should I see?..... That the little jug has somehow split in two!!! How perfect was that? I roared with laughter and thought it worthwhile to battle my way back to the car through the now driving rain to get my camera to vainly attempt to 'permanently' capture yet another true lesson in impermanence.

Sharon's grave has the lyrics of a song by Pete Seeger inscribed on it:

*To my old brown earth
And to my old blue sky
I'll now give these last few molecules of "I."*

*And you who sing,
And you who stand nearby,
I do charge you not to cry
Guard well our human chain
Watch well you keep it strong*

*As long as sun will shine
And this our home
Keep pure and sweet and green
For now I'm yours And you are also mine.*

*** O ***

Today Pat & I woke up, relishing the extra hour in bed and went on a 5 mile walk up a hill that I have looking at from my bedroom window since 1991, and this is the first time I have ever been up it. Sunny, windy, gorgeous clear views from the top and little snippets of The Litany of The Great Compassionate One drifting through my head.

I really look forward to returning to Throssel before too long.

Take care, In Gassho

Julian

.... X O X

/over

I am not sure what truths I can extract from this, but it does strengthen my sense of the interconnectedness of all things. My life has had a fair share of extraordinary events and connections that some others may tend to call, and sometimes dismiss as, *coincidences*. For me it is enough to know that they occur. It doesn't work to try and chase them. Thich Nhat Hanh uses the word ***Inter-being***. This word resonates with me. There *is* a connection. I have experienced it so many times

But for me there are insights that are relevant to us today to be gleaned from a seemingly insignificant incident that happened centuries ago outside a cave in Tibet.

Postscript

I was fascinated to read Willie Grieve's article in the last Sangha Newsletter where he explains about the Japanese art of Kintsugi - the process that actually celebrates the process and craft of repair. I have always enjoyed the challenge of repairing things - musical instruments, tables, watches, clocks, garden tools, furniture- you name it and I'll have a go! Friends and neighbours often bring things to me for repair. (At a previous retreat at Throssel I was asked to rebuild and repair the Vice Abbot's Chair. (That's a messy story involving frothing Gorilla Glue.... possibly for a future newsletter?))

I always feel satisfaction when I succeed in repairing something and get added enjoyment when the repair is neat or, better still, undetectable to the eye. But the art and practice of Kintsugi, emphasises the repair so that the eye is drawn to the actual repair as a reminder that '*nothing lasts, nothing is finished, and nothing is perfect.*' And it is always refreshing when a new idea or insight completely turns one of my unquestioned beliefs upside down! Should a repair be hidden or discrete? Should it be emphasised and celebrated?

Each morning after meditation Pat & I have been reading a section from Mindfulness for Beginners by Jon Kabat-Zinn. A couple of days ago this paragraph jumped out at me.

We've already seen why a non-judging attitude is so important if we are to see past the automatic and usually unexamined ideas and opinions we have about pretty much everything. When you begin paying attention to what's on your mind, you rapidly discover that basically everything is a judgement of one kind or another. It is good to be aware of this. No need to judge the judging or try to change it. Just seeing it is enough. Then true discernment can arise, a seeing things as they are. Not knowing is akin to not judging. When we don't have to immediately know everything, we can be open to seeing with fresh eyes.

Thank you, Jon. I need to keep being reminded of this!

Julian Goodacre



Coming to Buddhism

It was a long time ago, perhaps 35 years, at least it seems a long time ago now as my memory fails...

How do you come to Buddhism? Everybody has a story to tell. This is mine.

I came across the idea of Zen while reading a science fiction or speculative fiction novel. Mention was made of a question that could not be solved using logic.

I have a reckless curiosity (which has served me both well and badly) that drove me to find out more, partially driven by the certainty that no problem is insoluble if you think long enough and look up enough texts.

So, I found everything in the library that might help and ordered lots of books from the Buddhist Society in London. All I could find were lots of cryptic statements and conversations from Zen masters, lots of accounts from western monks of how hard the training was in Japan and a set of rules and a book called the Dhamapada.

It seemed to me that to get enlightened or have a 'kensho' you had to sleep for maybe 6 hours a night, eat as little as possible, drive the body hard (I ran long distance) and sit cross-legged counting the breaths for at least an hour a day. I needed to become vegetarian and stop drinking alcohol and stop smoking too: do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not use intoxicants, refrain from sexual misconduct. No problem.

Clearly these monks and masters were supermen (and women) as they went without sleep for 8 days (Rohatsu sesshin) on almost no food and got hit repeatedly after failing to answer cryptic questions. All I had to do was follow their example and I would get enlightened and then be able to answer these questions: 'Who are you?': 'What was your first face?': 'Mu!'

Much of that time I was also working up to 12 hours a day 7 days a week. My job involved much heavy physical labour in brutal environments, often away from home.

After 8 months of this I had a nervous breakdown and attempted suicide. So, no enlightenment, just mental illness and much suffering for my family.

A nurse in the psychiatric hospital gave me the address of a Buddhist group that met in the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh. This group gave rise to the current Portobello Priory.

But the problem remained — how to get enlightened? How to progress? How to find the answers to all my problems? I mean, surely it couldn't be as simple as described in 'Rules For Meditation'? I mean surely I should drive myself hard to overcome all my inadequacies? Well, it certainly hadn't worked the first time. Maybe I should try harder in a different direction? Or....?

So it all went on the back burner. I would occasionally drive down to Throssel Hole, attend the Salisbury Centre or more recently, visit the Portobello Priory. After some misgivings, I took lay ordination and sometimes spent time in a retreat.

Years went by. I studied for a degree while in full time work which took up a lot of time leaving little enough for sitting. I became very ill and spent time in hospital after a major operation. I retired, and looked after my very elderly father and step mother for a while. And when that was done I finally felt I had enough time to meditate in the mornings and more frequently visit the Portobello Priory.

So what have I learned? Not as much as Dogen who was asked:

'What did you bring back from China to Japan?'

He said, 'I came back empty-handed.'

'What did you learn?'

'Not much, except gentle-heartedness' he responded.

'And,' he added, 'I learned that eyes are horizontal, nose is vertical.'

Graham Jordan

Some Reflections on Enjoyment

Buddhism is sometimes viewed as pessimistic, as it talks quite a lot about suffering e.g. in the first Noble Truth. Suffering, or dissatisfaction, is what brings many of us to Buddhism in the first place and it is necessary that this is addressed. In addition, there is a degree of discipline necessary to sit regularly in zazen. Yet this is a gentle effort rather than an ascetic practice, and it is also the case that the third Noble Truth is about the end of suffering.

Being present involves fully engaging with whatever is here and we are encouraged to enjoy pleasurable activities ^[1]. In fact, when we engage with zazen, we see how much suffering is internally generated. I sometimes realise that I am worrying about something, and becoming tense, then I look round at my environment and see how pleasant it is, in contrast to what I have been thinking about. Occasionally, I find it helpful to cultivate gratitude by thinking about things I am grateful for. Before too long it feels that I can be grateful for everything. For example, most of the items in my house support me in some way, enabling me to have a comfortable and fulfilling life. As we engage with zazen, we start to see that we can even be grateful for suffering itself, as it teaches us how to let go of it and discern ways of generating it less for ourselves.

We do need to be careful not to strive for enjoyment. It is not something we can create at will, yet we can find it is often present when we let go of the negative thoughts that can block it.

Sometimes, sadness, grief and fear are normal reactions to an external situation, even when we are not generating them internally. Whether external or internal, our practice is to allow them to be there in the body and mind and to pass in their own time – and to make a response as needed. Probably enjoyment is not an appropriate description of these times, but there can be a sense of adventure in exploring the internal and external landscape, and we have a real sense that what we are engaged with is meaningful at the deepest level.

Neil Rothwell

^[1] e.g. Rev. Master Daishin Morgan: *Sitting Buddha*, page 42.

Hollywood



Formed from a branch of a holly tree from a friend's garden in Portobello, the column carries samples of Australian aboriginal art and a poem by Zen Master Ryokan:

*wait for the light
of the rising moon,
then leave
as stinging chestnut
shells are scattered
on the mountain path*

Any sangha member who would like to borrow the column for a month or two is most welcome.

It is about 3 feet high.

Ian McPhail

Changing perspectives -

The title originally was 'Training within Relationships' but it seems that my memories of how things are shift at present and make a change of title needed. This title springs to mind from a recent talk by RM Leandra where she quotes Dogen; *'The present chews up the past and spits it out'*. She says there is some kind of processing or digesting of our experience which brings us to the present moment.

My perspective on past events changes, sometimes in the blink of an eye. Our relationships change as we change, go on in the practice, the practice changes us - - somewhere I read about 'mixing and melding' so that our not knowing in Zazen throws light on our everyday experience. The questions arising from our everyday experience bring us back to explore that vast and not knowing heart/mind.

In his essay on Loneliness RM Daishin says: 'One thread on its own is never quite true because of all that has to be pared away to examine it as a single thread, we are not really made of parts, we are 'just this'. Reading that last night it struck me very forcibly that when I am engaging with memory to try and find some helpful ways to express things, then what I am doing is this very 'teasing out of one thread'. There may be some partial truths in there but the whole is not expressed in any words or ideas, however hard we work at it.

Even so..... this is what I was writing yesterday and the writing of it helped me to keep on looking..... Our family relationships can be most revealing as they are often the groundwork closest to us. We bring up our children as best we can and they teach us a lot. Testing our patience and push-



ing us to grow bigger and more warm hearted from the moment they first arrive. Having to let go of selfishness and consider their needs before our own is really challenging. Especially when we are sleep-deprived and weary, babies are hard work. (I have to say it is much easier being a grandparent!)

As they grow we are privileged to join their world of wonder at small things and are given the chance to really appreciate that fresh and vital view they bring to the most mundane things. Revelling with them in playing with mud, sand and water. I was fortunate to work with young children in the nursery so that fresh view was there for me to join in : playing in the House corner , encouraging art exploration, engaging with the joys and sorrows of youngsters who have not yet built up too many defensive layers.

Again with our grandchildren the world of wonder and joy we share as they explore new territory every day. So fortunate that they are just round the corner . Young children have a directness and honesty which can be challenging and they do have to learn how to express their thoughts and feelings in ways that don't hurt or offend others. We all need to grow up. .

Finding ways to apply the practice at work was a topic mentioned at a recent dharma evening. My memory of this is that making the time to do even a short



sit in the morning before going to work was a good way of helping me to remember to keep letting go of small irritations with other members of staff, rather than feeding them and building on to an old story of previous irritation with this particular person. Not that it always worked and right there was the challenge. I

liked someone saying at a recent sangha zoom meeting how helpful they found the teaching: 'Just ONE more time this mistake' rather than 'oh no not AGAIN!!!'.

Recently I have been talking a lot to our youngest child (Ali, 29 and counting!) about the practice of sitting and how the feeling of time changes, as we let go of the need to plan and GET ON to the next thing. Art is the topic for us often linking the way 'time does weird things when I'm drawing' as Ali said.

Also we can see that time is this 'weird' way once we sit down again to do formal meditation, the time in between is just not relevant in the usual way..... The place/time of sitting is linked to all of our sitting/being/time. This sounds a bit abstract and hard the thinking mind then goes off into ways to try and explain it better.....looking for words to express the inexpressible. 'A finger pointing at the moon.' 'The immaculacy of emptiness' from RM Jiyu or 'sufficiency' from RM Daishin. The words we use are those given to us from our family, friends, the time and country we live in. So many connections in the most basic of words. The words of the Dharma 'like raindrops refreshing our heavy hearts.'

Ali and I have also been talking about how I came gradually to join the Priory. When I was about 29, I was very active and probably restless in many ways. The first type of meditation for me was Tai Chi... meditation in movement, not sure that I could have coped with Just Sitting at that time. Then later my Tai Chi teacher said that it might help my meditation if I went round to the Priory which was just opening up at the time. How grateful I am that he suggested it. Who knows when I would have found my way to the Priory if not for that ?

At the time I was doing sitting meditation on my own within a broadly Christian tradition and had no group to discuss problems with. When tired there is a part of me that would love to still be able to do all the work in the Tai Chi class on the different forms. The recognition of our growing old and the adjustments we have to make are helped so much by the honesty we reconnect with constantly, by coming back to looking within. So that even now as I lie in bed (again) wishing I could just jump up and do something energetic, I listen to the

Dedication of Merit Ceremony from Throssel and the tears can flow to wash away those futile thoughts and allow a deeper connectedness to open up the heart.

When I hear the gongs and bells and the beautiful singing it's almost as though I am there in person. The connectedness goes so deep for me when the words are within the music and I am carried out of my small self to join that wish for all others: 'May all become compassionate and wise, May all become compassionate and wise.'

It's very hard to express the depth of my gratitude to Ross, my husband, who has always encouraged me to follow my heart in whatever ways feel right at the time. Now I can ask him to tell me to go and sit if he sees I am getting grumpy or have things out of perspective. He made my meditation bench, looked after the kids (mainly Ali the youngest) when I wanted to go to the Priory or down to Throssel, looks after me when I am unwell. Such a long list there could be, but no words can express that level of gratitude.

Next year with luck we will celebrate our 40th Wedding Anniversary. 'Because our hearts are one.'

Sometimes I have a strong image of myself down beside a flowing stream with a gingerbread man cutter, putting it onto the flowing water.....nothing separate or permanent. That feels like an enormous relief most of the time. Occasionally though a fear; how will I be able to know what to do?

To let that thought go too, and recognise its fleeting nature, is such a gift. 'Going on, going on, Always becoming Buddha.'

Alison coming to sleep while I sat; Caitlin and Niven asking about things on the altar. Pouring pure water A work in progress.

Voice memos — I ask Ross to tell me to go and sit. Sangha relationship. RM Favian, example of compassionate endurance of the Uncreate. Constantly pointing us back with humour and patience to the most important thing. Bowl floating upstream. RM Leandra ...on Dogen...present chews up past and spits it out. Processing. Image of holding a pastry cutter onto a stream —

Kathleen Campbell

Staying silent –

I have often regretted opening my mouth to speak. Rarely have I regretted staying silent. A sense of inadequacy pervades any statement or action I make or do.

There is always someone who better understands, who has better knowledge of any subject or situation. There will always be someone who can do better than I or act more wisely. Best to keep silent rather than be ashamed of my ignorance, of my inadequate understanding and show this off to others who are mostly much cleverer than me.

This, I have read, is remarkably common.

Making a demand that I or anyone else should be perfect is to demand that the world should be other than it is. A form of craving.

Being angry is also to demand that the world should be other than it is.

I have read from a small booklet entitled “On Trust in the Heart” -

*‘The One is none other than all,
All is none other than The One;
When this is clearly seen,
No more worry about not being perfect.’*

I have seen, at the side of an altar, an image of a being enveloped in flame. This is Acalanatha. He/she sits in the flame, just sits. I understand that this points towards how one should be with suffering: the suffering caused by loss, anger, shame. One just sits with it. And the nature of things is to change, to be impermanent, so one is assured it will pass, even if it is all consuming at the time. So who is doing this suffering? Who sits in the flame? And that disappears too.

Suffering I teach, and the way out of suffering.

The morning star.

Graham Jordan

Aberdeenshire Soto Zen Group

The old Aberdeen meditation group is being resurrected and has found a new home and name. The Aberdeen Group has met for many decades but prior to covid our weekly meetings had stopped but we still met regularly for monthly Sunday morning retreats led by Reverend Favian.

Over the covid period I came to really value the Scotland wide Sangha meetings held on Zoom. These zoom meetings made me realise the importance of the Sangha and how much I missed sitting with others regularly. So I decided to resurrect the group in the north east. I got in touch with the already established Sangha members in the northeast who were heartened to find they were enthusiastic to meet again as a group.

After some searching, I found a venue called The Haven in the town of Stonehaven, which is fifteen miles south of Aberdeen. Our first meeting will be on the 28th April at 7.30. I am looking forward to the group sitting again but my only fear is that too many people turn up! There has been quite a lot of interest but I am sure it will all work out on the night. If you fancy following our new groups journey feel free to follow our Facebook page – Aberdeenshire Soto Zen Group. If you ever find yourself in the northeast feel free to come along and visit us.

Thane Lawrie

++++ **STOP PRESS** +++

Thane's worries almost came true in that 20 people turned up on the 28th, so a very successful resurrection of the meditation group!

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