

# —Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*50th edition!*

***50th edition!***

*Newsletter & Calendar of Events*  
May-August 2015

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 Master Favian, Prior*

*(For details of the day-to-day schedule at the Priory, please see back page)*

## - Weekend events at the Priory -

### May 2015

Sunday 17th      Wesak      11am

### June

Sunday 14th      Renewal of Precepts      11am

### July

Sunday 12th      Renewal of Precepts      11am

### August

Sunday 16th      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.

*(Visitors—please phone beforehand, and please note when the Prior is holding retreats elsewhere: see inside back page)*

## — *Prior's Notes* —

**S**o this is the fiftieth Scottish Sangha Newsletter; a way for us to share our collective experience of training; to explore and celebrate the dharma of our lives through the Sangha refuge.

One of the themes that is expressed in our articles, in different voices, is the keeping faith with the spirit of what we have been given. This is not a clinging to outward forms for their own sake, but the intuitive holding to the formless truth they convey.

In a recent programme, a biologist commented that it is rare to find billion year old rock on the surface of the Earth, yet our DNA, the information for constructing our lives, has passed on as a soft thread in our cells continuously for 3 to 4 billion years. We are older than the mountains.

On hearing this, my mind turned to the Ancestral line of our tradition, the blood line of the Buddhas and Ancestors. Here there is also a soft thread of life that runs through us all, transmitting the spirit of training. When we receive the Blood line certificate at our ordination, we have our name added to the line, and a space is made below it for the one we transmit this truth to. This life giving thread is also older than the mountains but is also always realised and expressed in the present, through our life of training for self and others. We each have our unique offering to make and we have the presence and pressure of the Buddhas at our back.

When we worry about getting older, of the loss of

### ***Inside this issue-***

<i>A Message in a Bottle</i>	3
<i>Congratulations</i>	5
<i>We're almost home—</i>	7
<i>50! image</i>	9
<i>Jukai</i>	10
<i>The Sangha refuge</i>	11
<i>Just Being Home —</i>	12
<i>Simply Shaving</i>	14
<i>Retreat at Bob's</i>	15
<i>Journey to the Monastery</i>	16

energy to do what once we took in our stride, and when the Order undergoes change as we adapt and evolve, I find it helpful to put that in the context of this bigger picture of training; there is something unstoppable in its movement. The forms may change but the fundamental characteristic of keeping faith with the life of training, the letting go into what is good to do, keeps us in our true Ancestral line and maintains a deep trust in each other's Buddha Nature.



*Fish at Throssel Hole  
(with thanks to Debbie Sheringham)*

We are delighted to have three additional monastic offerings for our 50th edition of the Newsletter—from Rev. Master Daishin, Abbot at Throssel Hole Monastery (currently living in a hermitage in Wales), Rev. Alina who is one of Portobello Priory's trustees, and Rev. Caitlin from the Great Ocean Dharma Refuge in Pembrokeshire who, before becoming a monastic, lived in Portobello and (after Rawdon Goodier getting the Newsletter off the ground) was its first editor!

Our grateful thanks to all three —



*From Reverend Master Daishin —*

**Congratulations on the 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the Newsletter and the continuing life and training of the Portobello Priory —**

### **A Message in a Bottle**

*When she looks, Kanzeon sees right through herself.*

**S**uch seeing has no source and no direction. Once the point of myself is lost there is a clearness in everything. A pure stream that flows without justification.

It takes so long for self involvement to wear thin enough to see through. Although we could let it all go nobody does. There can be moments when it seems as though we do, but then we prefer the illusion. This situation is not hopeless, it's just that what it takes is more radical, and harder to recognise, than we are at first prepared for.

A trick to cleaning out an old bottle is to put in some gravel and water and shake it up until the grit loosens the dirt. Then, removing the cap, water, grit and dirt can be flushed away. Such is the parable, but it is like using a map, you have to know where you are before it is of any use. If we don't see where we are, pouring out all our troubles is like shaking the bottle without ever removing the cap. Taking off the cap is not like anything else. Everything that holds us comes loose, especially the idea of ourselves.

The Scripture of Great Wisdom says, “Here there is no suffering...” Where is that? It’s certainly not a place that can be known self-consciously. To look requires the relinquishing of any position. There is no birth or death even though we were born and will die; it is as two melodies resolving and separating in a sonata. Emptiness of self is not a blank void, but it is too easy to grasp an idea of a something beyond before the shaking and the grit have really done their work. Such talk of abrasion sounds like asceticism but there is no help in that. The point is to recognise that suffering happens anyway and the work is to see what it is. To look right through ourselves. If we try to do the shaking that will only make more dirt. The effort is to trust without grabbing on to a self-made refuge. In practice we grab one seeming refuge after another and so cannot see through. Only if we are fortunate does our refuge wear out while we still have enough time to understand that it was not what we believed it to have been. Gradually we learn that it is not about gaining anything, but even then we are still shaken. We expect to reach a place where the shaking will stop. If it were like that then our separation from being shaken would be a separation from life. To get rid of suffering is not the answer, nor is the answer to inure oneself to suffering. Yes, “*Here* there is no suffering”, but there is no point where that begins or ends. Life is full and the work is to conform to the nature of the realm where we are. Healthy or sick, pleasure or pain, young or old, right in the heart of it all is the *Here* and the continuing discovery of what to do. Or put that another way, the continuing discovery of life.

We set out long ago, what matters is to keep our original intention.

In gassho

Daishin



*From Reverend Alina —*

## Congratulations from the Priory's new trustee

**M**ost of you will know I took over as the external trustee of the Priory last year, when Rev. Alicia left to start the Sitting Buddha Hermitage in Derbyshire. It was good to be asked to be a trustee – I have appreciated Portobello Priory and sangha since my first visit on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and knew many of you already as you are such regular visitors here at Throssel.

Here is another landmark—the 50<sup>th</sup> newsletter! I congratulate all who have been involved in production and all who have contributed. It is an excellent newsletter, you probably don't realise how it stands out within the Order. I know of no other Priory that has such a well-supported newsletter, with a number of good articles, poems and features on training from sangha members each issue. I always looked out for it and read it when copies made it down to Throssel, and was impressed at the steady supply of thoughtful offerings, and the openness to speak of training, not an easy thing to do

publicly. This suggested to me a trust and strength of practice, which in turn indicates a supportive sangha.

On visiting the Priory, I just loved the place at once, the feel of the temple, the beautiful meditation hall, the openness and warmth of the congregation and your excellent Prior, Rev. Master Favian. The place struck me as a bit like a tardis; behind a plain door to a single storey flat in an ordinary looking house lies a delightful temple and a complete and true refuge. There is so much there, yet it is a small space. I know you all appreciate the place and your Prior, it is so evident in the support and openness I find when I visit, and had already heard about before I came.

As I write, we have just started our Jukai Retreat. I always find this a significant week, it is a joy to witness new trainees expressing their wish and commitment to practice, and to support them with all the wonderful teaching and ceremonies of this re-

treat. The call, the response, the wish to live well and the commitment to do one's best, how easy it is to miss that this is what really matters. We don't have to create anything, but look and see what already fills us to overflowing, which once awakened to, we gradually learn to relax into and allow to support us.

What fills the small space of the ground floor of 27 Brighton Place is Buddha, Dharma and Sangha treasure, revealed in the bright willing openness which is so evident when those who practice deeply come together. Congratulations, Portobello Prior and Sangha. It is good to be connected with you.

*Reverend Alina*



*A spring frog appears at Throssel  
(with thanks to Debbie Sheringham)*



## **We're almost home—some thoughts on perseverance**

**S**eventeen years into the life of the Priory, and fifty newsletters down the road, what a gladness that we are still here together and practising the Buddha's Way. In this light I thought it might be fitting to offer a few thoughts on commitment and perseverance. Of course this is something we all know about. We practise and learn it as we go to our cushions, to the Priory or Zendo over and over again; as we make the effort to turn to and act from our True Heart's wish and not be seduced by greed, hate and delusion - over and over again; as we say the Kesa verse and take the Bodhisattva vow to train for the good of all beings over and over again. The fact that the Portobello Priory is still there and flourishing is a testament to the bright perseverance of all of us.

And yet, as we all know, at times it seems hard to keep going brightly. Whilst the shared Buddha Nature of ourselves, all beings and things is sometimes sensed and known more clearly, at other times we may feel a sense of separation from the Eternal, a feeling of being far from Home. Sometimes people speak of the 'power of now'; but how to 'reconnect' with our True Heart when however we try the completeness of the present moment seems elusive, and acceptance of the here and now seems far away? For myself, I sometimes think that whatever state or circumstance we find ourselves in, it is always possible to practise and find the 'power of bow' and the 'power of vow'!

In turning towards and bowing to that which seems difficult and insurmountable, we are remembering and accepting the First Noble Truth that the Buddha taught - that suffering and dissatisfaction are an inherent facet of existence - and that although there is a cause and we can do something about it, there is no reason to blame ourselves or others when it arises. In bowing, we are also turning to the perfection inherent in all existence - to the Buddha, to our True Heart's wish - Buddha calling to Buddha, Buddha bowing to Buddha, and Buddha hearing and responding. Sometimes it helps to physically bow, to 'walk the talk' with the body; letting go, offering up,

asking for help, standing up straight and expressing willingness in a continuous movement, until the body overrides our complaining little brain, and the Heart's wish and direction is refreshed and restored in its rightful place.

Even as we seem to fail and flounder, we can also make resolves or commitments to train ourselves and affirm our Heart's wish and intention. We can recognise that whatever the apparent difficulty, it is habits of mind that cause, continue and compound the keenest suffering, and that this is something we can do something about. We can dare to make vows in front of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and trust that in doing so, and in our repeated, imperfect efforts to fulfill our sincere intentions, we will be aided and supported, for this is truly the case.

A number of years ago, at a time when I was feeling particularly lost, a venerable Master of our Order looked at me kindly and said, "You know - we're almost Home". Here we are, born with a rare and precious human body, in a benign and tolerant country, and we've found the Dharma in the lineage of the magnificent Master Houn Jiyu. May we not underestimate or squander the merit and good fortune that has brought us to this point - we've come a long way already. May we all keep going and go all the way on the Path of endless training.

*Reverend Caitlin*



*Artist & sangha member Jenny Smith created this laser-cut '50' image to celebrate the Newsletter's 50th edition.*

*Our grateful thanks to her!*



artwork ©Jenny Smith



## Jukai

**A**t the start of the Jukai retreat, we were asked ‘why do you want to be a Buddhist?’ Initially, I probably did not quite understand the question because my walk on this path started some time ago when coming across the 4 Noble Truths while reading about the Buddha when I was a teenager. It is then that I knew, as recognition, that Buddhism would have a significant place in this lifetime. The journey has been meandering ever since, as in Jukai, almost disappearing in my mid 20s and increasingly more consistent over the last 15 years. So the question for me was more: ‘Why do I want to receive the Buddhist precepts at this point in time?’ Possibly as a continuing desire to ponder and express the Bodhisattva way. Approaching the precepts, as Reb Anderson\* puts it: ‘not as rules to be worried about, but as ways to realize Buddha’s

enlightenment and compassion’. Also quoting his Master Suzuki Roshi: ‘Receiving the precepts is a way to help us understand what it means to just sit’. And Reb Anderson to add: ‘When you practice the precepts, meditation comes alive. This integration of precept practice and meditation practice, whether on your cushion, at the workplace, or in a relationship, is what I mean by ‘being upright’”.

To me, what came to mind in the minute details of daily life during the retreat and beyond is that the precepts seem an ongoing invitation to deepen one’s experience of ‘being’, not adding anything to what is, cultivating equanimity and allowing oneself to flow in and as life.

*Christele Geuffroy*

\* Reb Anderson (2000) *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts*, Rodmell Press.

## *The Sangha Refuge*

**A**s we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> issue of this newsletter, I have been thinking about what it would have been like to practice meditation entirely on my own, without the support of others. It is hard to imagine. From the time of joining a meditation group, to going to Throssel, and to being part of the Priory, the Sangha has always been there.

When we sit together in zazen, a real sense of connection is present. We are not interacting in the normal social ways, yet we are somehow deeply sharing. Anyone who sits is part of this – it is unconditional. How we experience this is infinitely variable, but the foundation is always there.

The Sangha helps to give our practice a momentum. Knowing that there are a group of people who are following the same, rather unconventional path, and knowing that I can connect with them on a regular basis, provides a reference point for my own training. This includes people I do not see very often. The Sangha can also be felt when we are alone – the sense of all the others, who by their commitment, are helping us to move forward. This illustrates one aspect of how training is itself an offering. To sit in zazen is to be part of that Sangha that is supporting others.

Of course, we interact and share in other ways, as well as sitting, including chatting, doing activities together, and developing friendships. I find that being with others holds up a mirror to my own behaviour, and the compassion and trust of the Sangha encourages me to learn from this.



An image I have is of leaves on a tree. Each one of us is individual and different, yet we are all connected with the same root. It is very apt to call the Sangha one of the Three Treasures.

*Neil Rothwell*

*Just being home —*

**M**y first visit to Throssel was in the mid 70's.

Essentially the ethos was almost identical to today's, a great testament to the strength and perseverance of Rev. Master Jiyu's vision in bringing Soto Zen to the UK.

Here are a few memories:

- I remember being put to work with a monk called Daishin Morgan in the old coal mine, the entrance being into the hill behind where the pets cemetery now stands.

It was a tunnel snaking back into the hill, about 4' 6" high, dripping with water, and lit with candles in jam jars every 5 yards or so. I had visions of would-be visitors to Zen monasteries being made to wait at the gates for days before being admitted to test their resolve, and thought that for two individuals over 6 feet tall, that this must have been a similar test!

- Sleeping in the old barn, which was the Zendo/Ceremony hall, was a chilly affair in the winter, with two big paraffin heaters blooping to themselves and not making much difference, lying under about 10 old army blankets, as your breath came out like white smoke.

- Visits to the loo in the night were via an outside set of steps, lethal with frost, and making me severely regret having had a last cup of tea before lights out.

- One new year when a punch had been made with two bottles of wine, with the resulting very giggly monks.

- Trying to sit in the full Lotus position with my knees and ankles screaming at me, and waiting desperately for the bell to end Zazen.

- Straightening nails with a hammer, a particularly good test of mindfulness, fingers and thumbs providing instant Kharma if not.

This ragbag of memories is accompanied by a sense of warmth, non-judgementalism, truth, and just being home.

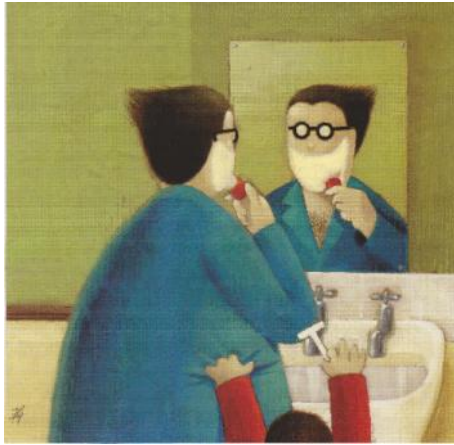
I get this also from my now all too infrequent visits to Portobello.

I am so grateful to Rev. Favian and Rev. Lewyn who have been at the helm of Portobello Priory since it opened.

*Fedor Bunge*



*Snowdrifts at Throssel during the recent winter  
(from the Throssel Hole Abbey website)*



## **Simply Shaving**

Face in Mirror  
Stubbly, sleepy

Face in mirror  
Snow clouds, wet and fluffy

Face in Mirror  
Clean, fresh, smooth

Same face....

Being objective, my face

Being subjective, I have no face

Simply being, simply shaving

*Eddie Shields*



## *Retreat at Bob's —*

**O**nce a month there's a very special commitment in my diary 'Retreat at Bob's'. The word 'Retreat' is fitting on many levels. Nothing else in my month is quite like it. Furthermore, other than my closest family, very little else reassures, provokes, challenges and comforts me so deeply.



The Retreats motivate me to sit with what is in my daily life - warts and all; to embrace, and quite frankly at times endure, what is arising within my own mind. Those stubborn patterns of thinking can be frustratingly entrenched! I have an internal voice that likes to pipe up; 'You're a poor excuse for a Buddhist'. But then, if I didn't hear that voice, I wouldn't keep training. If I have developed one thing, it's determination.

The Dharma talks by Rev Master Favian never fail to strike a chord, even if sometimes the content requires a fair bit of digestion and reflection. But I'm more relaxed these days, knowing that my intellect can only take me so far with this process. The key is in the act of regularly sitting and living the life of the precepts with persistence.

I relish my quiet and beautiful drive home from Bob's (weaving through the Aberdeenshire countryside shown in the picture) in gratitude that somehow in those few hours of sitting, listening and sharing I have shifted and changed. Sometimes in a subtle way, sometimes in a more dramatic way. More often than not, I've identified some area of my life that I could handle more skilfully and compassionately.

Perhaps I derive most comfort from knowing that I'm not so different and distant from everyone else. With a few exceptions, fundamentally we all wish to be loved and cared for. My training reminds me of this and lifts me out of my own story...chapter by chapter.

In gassho,

*Sarah Gray* (Aspiring buddhist!)

*Rawdon Goodier's description of the journey from Edinburgh to Throssel Hole first appeared in the Priory Newsletter in 2009, in two parts over two editions. It seemed appropriate in the 50th edition to reprint it as one article —*

## *The Journey to the Monastery*

**I**t is now nearly 30 years since I first started making periodic visits southwards to Throssel Hole. Sometimes I have travelled by rail via Newcastle but generally it is the journey with others by car over the Border hills, that has become most closely associated in my mind with the journey to the monastery. If you look at a map of southern Scotland and Northern England of a scale so that you can compare them with neighbouring regions it immediately becomes apparent how sparsely settled this part of Britain is so that the most direct inland route is mainly through open country, farmland or moorland, with just the occasional small country town or village.

What I describe here are accumulated impressions over many years; they do not occupy the whole of my mind on every journey to the neglect of other aspects of the landscape – the seasonal changes in colour, the pattern of old ridge and furrow prominent under winter sunshine - though having once noted them I guess I am nudged by their recollection.

Setting off from Edinburgh open country soon appears. I have the feeling of leaving town when starting to ascend the hill just south of Dalkeith, particularly when, on gaining height, one glimpses the fine view northwards across Edinburgh and the Firth of Forth.

Ahead the steep northern scarp of the Lammermuirs. The route is now close to the line of the old Roman road – Dere Street – of which we encounter several sections on our way south. Here it can be followed on foot a little to the west of the present road passing on the crest at 1200 ft, Soutra Aisle, the remains of an old Augustinian monastic hospice and monastery founded by King Malcolm IV. Here the needs of wayfarers were attended to in the



*Soutra aisle—all that remains of the hospice & friary*

middle ages. Then, passing the elegant turbines of the Dun Law wind farm the road descends into Lauderdale and the watershed becomes that of the Tweed.

All the country between Edinburgh and Throssel lies within the boundary of the old Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, a kingdom long since dissolved but which left a very strong imprint upon the place names and religious history before much of it was ceded to Scotland in 973. Actually our route is within the northern part of Northumbria which used to be called Bernicia. What is now Lauderdale was probably the birthplace and early childhood home of St Cuthbert and thus has a special place in the history of the region.

Bede tells the story of the vision that was to determine Cuthbert to become a monk: *“Cuthbert, at that time (31<sup>st</sup> August 651), happened to be looking after a flock of sheep committed to his charge, away up in the hills. One night when his companions had gone to sleep and he was keeping watch and praying as usual, he suddenly saw light streaming from the skies, breaking the long night’s darkness, and the choirs of heavenly hosts coming down to earth. They quickly took into their ranks a human soul, marvellously bright, and returned to their home above. The youth was moved by this vision to give himself up to spiritual discipline in order to gain eternal happiness with the mighty men of God. . . . Next day he was told that Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, a man of outstanding holiness, had passed into the Kingdom of Heaven at the time of his vision. He delivered the sheep back to their owners and decided to enter a monastery.”*

I am not concerned to “demythologise” Cuthbert’s vision but reading about it reminded me of the view of the northern lights (Aurora Borealis) that I had seen when driving over the Soutra Pass in the early 1950s. To the Welsh poet R S Thomas, commenting on a similarly rare occasion on which he saw them in North Wales – they were something *“tremendum et fascinans”*. .. not unlike a huge ladder between earth and heaven and *“behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”* I think most people who see the Aurora Borealis are similarly moved by this wonderful natural phenomenon which is in no way diminished by its scientific explanation.

The monastery to which Cuthbert made his way was not the impressive remnant in present Melrose which was built by the Cistercians in 1136, but the

much older foundation of Old Melrose (Mailros). This, situated in a great bend of the Tweed about two miles downstream, was founded by St. Aidan in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century with monks brought from Iona by way of Lindisfarne. Thus it was the monasticism of the Celtic Church that Cuthbert joined. The first Abbot Eata was one of the twelve Saxon youths instructed by Aidan himself. The name of the first Prior, St Boisil, is perpetuated in the



*Scott's view*

the name of the nearby village of St Boswells. Cuthbert himself became the third prior until he was called to become prior at the head monastery of Lindisfarne in 664. The site of Old Melrose Abbey can be overlooked by taking a brief diversion from the main road to Scott's View – a favourite vista of Sir Walter Scott.

A signpost points the way to Duns, a little off our route to the east. It is only recently that I have become slightly acquainted with the thoughts of the philosopher/theologian Duns Scotus (1265-1308). He was a near contemporary of Dogen and a younger contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, with whose views he disagreed on several important points. Although deriving his name from the small town of Duns he was reputedly born at Maxton close to our route at St Boswells.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Dun Scotus' complex and, to me, often baffling thought is where he differs from Aquinas 'in holding that the mind has a direct, though not clear, intuition of the individual (thing) whereas for Aquinas the mind knows the individual only by reflex reference to the memory and the senses', our intellectual appreciation being, according to Scotus, subsequent to our experience of the thing in its thisness.

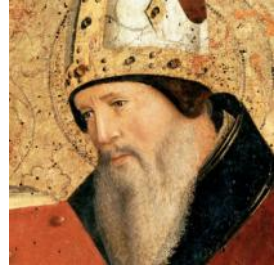
The intuition of this immediacy of experience prior to thought or 'thisness' (haecceitas) strongly appealed to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Jesuit poet Hopkins who was a self con-



*Duns Scotus*

fessed disciple of Scotus. It was interpreted by him as *'emphasis on the individuality of every natural thing'*, which he called *inscape*. 'Just then', he wrote, 'when I took in any inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus'. This, I feel, has interesting resonances with Buddhist experience though I think we would give more emphasis to the inseparability of the individual from its participation in one-ness – the experience which led Tozan to exclaim *'I meet it everywhere, it is just I myself and I am not itself'*

I understand that two main schools or tendencies of thought can be distinguished within the Christian philosophical/theological tradition – within this tradition you tend to be either an Aristotelian Thomist or an Augustinian Platonist according to whether you regard the intellect or the will as the prime mover in man. The Thomistic approach, much influenced by Aristotle, give primacy to the intellect, stressing the importance of wisdom. The Augustinian approach, after St Augustine and Plato, accord primacy to the will, and stress the importance of love. It is interesting to ponder parallels in Buddhism for, although we try to avoid being caught in dualities, one can see that there are Buddhist schools which tend to emphasize Manjusri (Wisdom) on the one hand and others where Kanzeon or Samantabhadra (love/compassion) are emphasized. Duns Scotus, being a Franciscan friar, was Augustinian in so far as he accorded priority to the Will and to Love.



*St Augustine*

I have the impression that most Christian thinkers who have shown a serious interest in Buddhism have tended to be oriented towards Augustine whereas those who seem to be more critical tend to be the Thomists.

This may seem a rather strange intellectual diversion for a Buddhist on the way to Throssel but it is interesting how ones deepening appreciation of a landscape can give rise to these trains of thought and, being affiliated to a modern Bernician monastery, it seems natural to have an interest in the past monastic history of the region. This is particularly fascinating because of the interaction between Roman and Celtic Christianity.

We generally by-pass Melrose, and also the fine ruins of the old Abbey at

Dryburgh, before arriving at Jedburgh with its striking remains of an Augustinian Abbey. These three abbeys were established by three different orders, Melrose by the Cistercians, Dryburgh by the Premonstratensians and Jedburgh by the Augustinians. While the Cistercians were cloistered monks the two latter orders were canons – white canons (Premonstratensians) and black canons (Augustinians).



*Jedburgh Abbey*

Passing through Jedburgh the road starts to climb towards the border still on or near the line of the old Roman road which runs south from the Roman Fort at Melrose beneath the Tri-montium, the triple peak of the Eildon Hills, to that at Corbridge. Not long after crossing the border into England at Carter Bar we leave the Newcastle road only six miles short of the Theravaden vihara at Harnham. How remarkable it is that we have Harnham, Throssel and Samye Ling, this cluster of Buddhist monastic foundations, as neighbours in this small part of ancient Northumbria. Not far off our road to the east lies the small hamlet of Bavington, which the Northumbrian poet Kathleen Raine claimed as being the place that she would 'later and for years to come to love most in the world' where 'Even such returning desecrates – do not disturb the barrow on the hill, leave buried there the treasure of past days'

Soon after passing the line of the Roman Wall glimpses of Hexham clustered around its Abbey come into view. In passing through Hexham thoughts arise of St Wilfred, the abbey's founding bishop. Wilfred was a very interesting though not altogether lovable character. Although a contemporary of St Cuthbert he was of entirely different temperament. His biography by Eddius Stephanus and comments in Bede paint a picture of someone with immense energy and a strong ego. His energy saw him through a life of very remarkable activity and achievement, his ego ensuring that the passage was often very turbulent. Apart from his establishment of

several monasteries, including Hexham and Ripon abbeys, his bishopric initially included the whole of Northumbria and he had the role of spiritual advisor to the Queen. However he was twice banished from the kingdom, initially by King Egfrith for encouraging the Queen to pursue the ambition to become a nun at Coldingham and then, later, by King Adfrith for contesting the re-arrangement of his see which had taken place during his first exile. In both cases he travelled to Rome to pursue an appeal to the papal authorities. Of his original abbey in Hexham only the crypt remains as evidence of its continued occupation for 1400 years. Wilfred is perhaps most remembered for his leading role at the Synod of Whitby (664 AD.) which secured the superiority of the Roman over the Celtic church. Although the dispute between the two churches was, nominally, over the date of Christian festivals, particularly Easter, more fundamentally it was concerned the implications of the very different types of church organization. When reading of the arguments between the religious traditions of that time one cannot but admire the civilized behaviour of the disputants – far more benign than in the later Reformation, yet they took place within an otherwise violent society.

In a recent talk Rev Master Daishin mentioned an ancient church he visited in Wales which had been used by many generations of human beings and had witnessed many births, deaths and centuries of prayer. T. S Eliot in 'Little Gidding' instructs us to 'kneel where prayer has been valid' and, though we may be Buddhists, I do not feel that we need to be insensitive to this validity. While Eliot focuses on Little Gidding as a place 'where prayer has been valid' he also mentions that 'There are other places which are also at the world's end, some at the sea jaws'. The places 'at the sea jaws' that Eliot had in mind were Iona and Lindisfarne. Northumbria seems particularly rich in such 'other places' which, for me, include the Augustinian priory church at Brinkburn and the little Saxon chapel at Escomb to the north of Durham.

Once through Hexham the route climbs into the North Pennine valleys and one becomes aware that the end of the journey is near. I generally prefer to travel via Catton and there turn off to go over Allendale Moor. A pleasant though more energetic option is to get off the bus at Catton and walk the seven miles over the moor though I must confess that I have done this but

seldom. Ascending from Catton towards the summit of Acton and Kevelin Moors one can look eastwards over the East Allen Valley to Hexamshire Common which drains east into Rowley Burn where Cadwalla, the British King of Gwynedd was killed in 633 following his defeat in his final battle against the colonizing northern Angles. One is reminded that before the Anglo-Saxon domination the whole of this region as far north as Edinburgh was Welsh speaking.

Crossing the summit of the moor the vista expands to encompass the whole of the upper part of West Allendale, a view which is unspectacular but impressively conveys a spacious openness. While, over the years, I have arrived at the monastery in a variety of mind states I never cease to associate this view with a sense of homecoming, an entry into a 'landscape of the heart'.

*Rawdon Goodier*



*Pond at Throssel*  
*(with thanks to Debbie Sheringham)*



***Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter.  
Deadline for next issue is mid-August 2015***







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

### **May 2015**

Saturday 30th	Dundee group morning	<i>10am-1pm</i>
Sunday 31st	Aberdeen morning retreat	<i>10am-1pm</i>

### **June**

Saturday 20th	Dundee group morning	<i>10am-1pm</i>
Sunday 21st	Aberdeen morning retreat	<i>10am-1pm</i>

### **August**

Saturday 22nd	Dundee group morning	<i>10am-1pm</i>
Sunday 23rd	Aberdeen morning retreat	<i>10am-1pm</i>

### ***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
<b>Highland</b> -	Shooie	(01997) 477378

# — 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**

- are usually held on the second Saturday of each month. A short talk will be given about Buddhist practice and the Serene Reflection Meditation (Soto Zen) tradition, with meditation instruction and discussion.

2.30-4pm

**Sunday 10th May, Saturday 13th June, Saturday 11th July, Saturday 8th August**

## **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 Master Favian Straughan*