

—Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, Founder of our Order.
This year is the 20th anniversary of her death*

Newsletter & Calendar of Events September-December 2016

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— 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 -

September 2016

Sunday 18th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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October

Sunday 16th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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November

Sunday 13th	Festival of the Founder	11am
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December

Sunday 4th	Festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment	11am
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Saturday 31st	New Year Festival	7.30- 10.30pm
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The Priory is open to visitors as well as trainees every day from
6.45am - 9.15pm
except Mondays, Thursday afternoons, and Sunday pm.

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

— Prior's Notes —

In Reverend Master Daishin's book; '*Buddha Recognises Buddha*', he states:

...when we speak of awakening the mind that seeks the way, we are not pointing to some other mind that we need to acquire. Dogen Zenji vividly expresses this by describing the mind that seeks the way as, among other things, the mind of grass and trees. This puts the mind that seeks the way on a level with existence itself. Our very existence is the mind that seeks the way: it is as fundamental as that. If we get bogged down in self-concern, it is because we have not realized what our self actually is—that the will to enlightenment is synonymous with our own existence and the existence of everything.

Last week I had a holiday with my family on the south-east coast of Scotland. One day while walking and talking on the curving headland, we were suddenly met by a view opening up before us - the land fell away down to the open sea with crashing waves on the rocks below. It was one of those moments where the sense of self and its separateness, its views and opinions are dissolved, and we are simply the open and present awareness of 'this'- the full and complete moment of dynamic life meeting itself.

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Reflecting on Reverend Master's teaching I am also reminded of Reverend Master Jiyu's phrase, "to sanctify the mundane", which I feel is not a dualistic statement, dividing the world into that deemed spiritual or not, rather it points to the dynamic activity of *Zazen* that awakens us to the already sacred nature of existence. In our sitting this is known when we practice not adding or taking away from that which arises in the moment. So if fear or anger arise, they are not to be rejected as

‘not buddha’, but neither are they to be indulged. When anger, say, is allowed to simply ‘be’, in open awareness, its true undivided nature can reveal itself, and its dharma can highlight our deep perceptual wish not to hate. The self-investment in the anger, its story of reaction and defence can dissolve.

When people come to the Portobello temple for an introductory session they sometimes comment at the door that we don’t particularly stand out from the other tenement flats in the street. But after they enter the Meditation room with its simple and direct aesthetics and sit still amidst images of compassion and awakening, they often comment on the supportive presence of the place. I take this as a reminder of the authentic functioning of both the physical and ceremonial forms of our tradition: the making and maintaining of sacred spaces of Practice.

The sacred spaces and moments of our life may seem often rare or easily overlooked, yet serve as a vital reminder of the undivided nature, arising afresh before and within us, if we have the eyes to see. Reverend Master again points the way:

Within the surrender to the reality of now, there is a knowing, but it is not ‘my’ knowing. It is the universe knowing itself within this immediate place.



Hadeel Trip to Israel/Palestine in April 2016

Many people have very different views on the history and politics of this small piece of land . My husband Ross has a huge library with hundreds of books written by Israelis, Palestinians, travellers, journalists, historians and commentators from many nations. Even the words used to denote historical facts are different. If you are interested in learning more there is no shortage of words written already.

These words are just about some aspects of the trip of a group of volunteers from Hadeel, a shop in Edinburgh selling Palestinian goods. Over 10 days we visited lots of groups in the West Bank (or Occupied Territories) ; we were looking at their products, mainly small-scale handcrafted goods, hearing how they are doing, and looking to see how they were trying to apply Fair Trade principles to their group.

The groups varied considerably.

Canaan Olive Oil has a wonderful new factory in Jenin. Theirs is a successful enterprise producing high quality organic oil and exporting to many different countries. They are encouraging more farmers to join and offer prices above the market and guarantee to take their product year on year. It is very heartening to see work like that being done amidst constant restrictions. Often the



Canaan Olive Oil

farmers have been cut off from their land, and have to apply for permits to go to do the care and harvesting.

One small group in Bethlehem, Oasis , was set up to offer work and training to people with disabilities. They operate out of a very small building with limited space and make recycled paper, cards with pictures done in



Oasis organisation

coloured sands. They find it difficult to get their goods marketed and Hadeel is one of the few outlets for their work.

There are many small groups of women doing traditional embroidery in different villages and refugee camps across the West Bank. One is Idna, with a group who have the help of a Japanese designer to make the goods more appealing to the Western market.

They have managed to become fairly successful and are keen to develop new products. Another is Surif who make some very high quality traditional runners and stoles, however they have not yet been able to develop many new styles or communication links with the outside world.

There are too many groups to really give a true picture..... in all of them we were met with incredible hospitality and kindness. The spirit and resilience is astounding. Even a short time there makes me really appreciate how deeply fortunate we are to live in a country free of blocks and barriers. Where we do not have to ask anyone's permission to travel. Where we have water and power on tap . Free access to health care without having to wait at check points.....the list goes on.

In the Negev desert we went to Lakiya, a group making traditional woven wool rugs and bags etc. They are also in new premises and have projects with the local schools developing small scale food production gardens , some with hydroponics. Very heartening.

Then we went to have a delicious lunch in a house in one of the "Unrecognised Villages". The lady who fed us was obviously pleased to show us her plot of land... a tiny square, with fencing cobbled together from scraps of old metal. A few hens , chickens and goats.

The people in these villages have traditionally been nomadic and now have to

live settled in houses. They have no building permits and so their houses are often demolished by the Israelis. Then they have to pay for the demolition so they prefer to demolish the houses themselves.

I tried very hard to remember Dogen's words about regarding all people as if they were your own children. Not always successful.

Yet all are human beings with just that very human mixture of greed, hatred and delusion..... and potential for the good .

We pray for peace in all the world.

We pray for the cessation of all disaster.

We offer merit for the awakening of all beings.

Kathleen Campbell



— *West Bank embroidery* —

Gifts and gratitude

Most days I sat on the tops,
those gentle hills of Colonsay.
Let's name them: Carnan Eoin, Carn Mhor,
Beinn nan Gudairean, nan Caorach, Breac,
Binnein Riabhach
Grass and bog-myrtle, dark peaty pools
Dried heather; ark, ark of ravens
The trilling of skylarks in the high April air

Finding shelter from the week-long north wind, bitter
The smell of snow in it -
My eyes were drawn to the wide sea.
Jura, Islay, Mull, Tiree, Coll and even
to the north-west tip of Ireland.
Broken land
Scattered, profuse to the horizon.

Unbidden, my father's advice came to mind.
He was no stranger to the mountains.
Put your foot in the right place,
And let the hill carry you up.
And:
Climb at your own pace, never
At another's; this won't work.

And it doesn't, and the hill does carry you up.
What good advice! Gifts from a father to a son.

I bow in gratitude to him.

Willie Grieve



What is Good to Do?

Throughout the day, we are making small decisions about what to do next. We may be busy, with a whole host of things on our to-do list. Or we may be responding to a situation in an ongoing way e.g. looking after a child. No matter how busy, we still have to make these decisions. In practice, this is a fairly natural process, and it is not necessary to be self-conscious about. On the other hand, it can be easy to let our minds go into automatic pilot, just doing one thing after another without really looking at what we are doing.

I have been experimenting recently with taking a moment to consider what to do next. This has been quite instructive. Firstly, I can go whole swathes of time without tuning into this. I simply forget to do it. When I do stop, quite often my initial reaction is uncertainty. There may be several things that need doing, or there may be nothing in particular that seems pressing. Often just being with this uncertainty for a while seems the most useful thing. It becomes, in effect, a short period of meditation.

I think most of us have had the experience of sitting in zazen when an insight about something that needs doing comes 'out of the blue'. It feels like

meditation allows the space for these insights to arise in consciousness. Similarly, if I can tolerate the uncertainty for a while, a way forward reveals itself. It may be simply one of things I had on my to-do list. Quite often, it is something that does not have a practical priority but is quietly beneficial in some way - perhaps deciding to make contact with someone, or take some time to rest. In this way, it can help to realign my priorities to giving, rather than just getting through life.

It can bring attention to the valuable aspects of apparently mundane tasks e.g. hoovering the carpet so as to look after it and prolong its life. It also highlights my aversions and preferences, enabling me to be both conscious of them in a way I might not previously have been, and to integrate them into my decision-making with letting them dominate.

Even to do this to a fairly limited extent makes everyday life more satisfying: I feel that I am seeking to do things in the best way I can rather than skimming along the surface of activities. It helps to bring together the modes of being and doing.

Neil Rothwell

Renewal of Wedding Vows

On 21st May Rev. Favian travelled to Aberfeldy to lead a Marriage Blessing Ceremony for Claire Hewitt and Robin Baker who were celebrating 30 years of marriage, surrounded by their children and grandchildren and other close family members.

During the ceremony we renewed our commitments to each other and to the highest good, offering our gratitude to the great Masters and teachers of our tradition.

The ceremony was held inside the house because the blustery weather would have blown the candles out.

After the ceremony the sun shone and we proceeded down the garden to the newly created stone garden inspired by our trip to Japan last year.

Rev. Favian's presence was greatly appreciated by everyone but we were particularly grateful to have the presence of our friend and teacher on this very special day.

Robin Baker



Robin & Claire with Rev Favian



A carving —

This piece of oak started in a woodland in south-west France about four centuries ago.

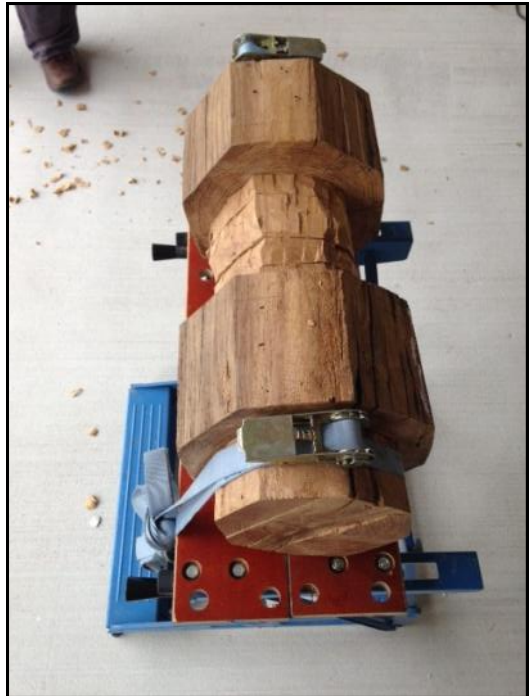
When given to me it was cuboid in shape, full of old rusty broken nails. It has a significant crack along its length and many minor ones. Woodworms had had many meals and there was some wet-rot.

My aim is to produce a simple mechanical but rhythmic form consisting of octagonal nuts bolts and washers, at the same time keeping some of the original characteristics.

At a recent wood-carving demo Neil and Jerry helped with the progress and I would like to suggest that others in the sangha participate in its development. Perhaps we could give the finished article to Throssel Hole.

In gassho,

Ian McPhail



Ian's carving

A walk on the 'wild' side—Mindfulness in the garden and beyond

I thought I might offer some thoughts and observations about my present walking practice and on the help I get from Suzie, the dog.

We live in a quiet East Lothian village and over the past 6 years have rebuilt a cottage and developed a garden of plants, fruit trees and vegetables with the aim of providing and maintaining habitat for wild creatures, in particular bumblebees. We are lucky and appreciative of what being here and participating with this garden provides for us.

In the garden is a hut – built from locally sourced timber by a good friend, a green timber building specialist, aided and supported by my son and myself a few years ago. This hut started off as a place to read, write and contemplate and has now become my 'zendo' – in it I have a small altar and a cushion facing the wall.

With practising in the hut I have gradually discovered that I have a tendency towards ritual and these rituals are now evolving. I usually sit zazen for two 30-40 minute periods – morning and evening and end each sit with kinhin or mindful walking. Because the

hut is small this walking takes place outside whatever the weather or season.

The hut is situated at the wilder end of the garden, where the vegetable patch and fruit trees are. I begin with a bow to the whole wide universe and then take a step for each breath, keeping aware of breathing, sensation of feet on the ground or in movement, and of the flow of mind as thoughts come and go. When I started this practice I

was acutely aware of the contrast between being in the hut and being outdoors where so much was happening. On reflection everything is moving shifting, growing, fruiting or

dying whether I am in the hut or not! But distractions from awareness and into observation and then a whole string of thought were common! I now think I was simply discovering what awareness might be. Now I walk with eyes open and allow myself to feel all physical and sensory aspects of being but without thinking too much about them – simply enjoying the experience of 'just being'.

I walk at a slow pace and stop when something comes into focus or calls to me – whether it is a bird in song, a



blackbird erupting from the vegetable patch, dew drops on a leaf, a bud, a blossom, a flower or a berry - I appreciate and give thanks. Sometimes this small walk around the garden takes much longer than at other times. What the garden and the universe beyond gives is a sense of being with it and within it, and also a great appreciation of impermanence – through seasonal change or change by the second, and of flow.

Beyond the garden

Beyond the garden is the village and there is a walk I do with Suzie, our dog. She is old now, with arthritic paws, stiff joints and shortness of breath, but we have aged together for the past 13 years and both bear these marks of change and impermanence. In her slowing down and her enthusiastic investigation of our way round the circuit she sets both the pace and an example. This walk too is done with mindful awareness and with an acknowledgement of change and passing seasons.

I have learnt from Suzie to take joy in being, to be inquisitive and aware and to savour, to take time to appreciate and to be fully at one within each moment.

We walk down the lane between ash trees, bright yellow gorse against the blue sky, amazing fireweed with its

purple shimmer, the buzz of insects, the movement of grass, the gulls bobbing on air flow. Suzie stops to take in scents fully, I stop to check on gooseberries or admire a web. We feel the earth under our feet and paws, we hear the wind through the leaves and the occasional buzzard shriek. Sometimes we disturb a deer or a hare. At the bottom of the path is a wild space – overgrown with bramble, nettle and hawthorn, though magnificent ash trees rise from it. This space has a real flavour, it pulls me in, I often bow to it and pause for a few moments in appreciation and of being within it.

Beyond is the burn, where Suzie will cool off and I examine the water for insects and fish and enjoy the sound of water passing; here I can reflect on flow, on being one with the wave. And so our walk continues, at times passing familiar landmarks, at times recognizing everything changes. Not thinking just moving and being. Perhaps that is what Suzie has taught me most – moving, being, going with the flow.

I should add – not each day is tempered with this calm. Each day and moment has different qualities and some days, like many of us, and like Suzie on the grass at times, I'm just simply chasing my tail...

Jerry Simcock

The Delusion of Enlightenment

Too embarrassed to ask if anyone knows what Enlightenment feels like, I have always kept the question to myself.

When I first started to practice, I sort of ignored Enlightenment. I thought that it was something beyond me and not achievable. Sometimes, I thought I could see it in other people; mostly Buddhists, but not always. The presence of a deep compassion; a kindness; a lightness.

Eventually I realised that I couldn't ignore enlightenment, it was too important. I pondered.

Enlightenment = Awakened.

So was I awakened? Rarely. But I did feel I achieved very occasional moments of it. The times in life when everything is good and the sun is shining and you feel alive. So, progress.

That's what I believed until this summer, when the penny dropped, that what I thought was Enlightenment was actually Bliss. And bliss is just bliss. Not Enlightenment. This was about the same time that I finally realised that 'just sitting', meant exactly that - 'just sitting.'

Sometimes the layers of delusion slide away. Who knows why, who knows when. And although I miss my delusion, it is better to look for the truth.

Pam Strachan



*Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter.
Deadline for next issue is mid-December 2016*





- Events elsewhere in Scotland with the Prior -

September 2016

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

October

Friday 28th	Aberfeldy evening retreat	7.30-9pm
Saturday 29th	Dundee morning retreat	10am-1pm
Sunday 30th	Aberdeen morning retreat	10am-1pm

November

Saturday 19th	Inverness day retreat	10.00am-4.00pm
Friday 25th	Aberfeldy evening retreat	7.30-9pm
Saturday 26th	Dundee morning retreat	10am-1pm
Sunday 27th	Aberdeen morning retreat	10am-1pm

For further details please phone :

Aberdeen -	Bob McGraw or Joyce & Gordon Edward	(01330) 824339 (01467) 681525
Aberfeldy -	Robin Baker	(01887) 820339
Dundee -	Elliott Forsyth	(01333) 451788
Highland -	Ann Milston	(01309) 696392 or hzg@inbox.com

— 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 (but not always—please check dates below) 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.

**Saturday 10th September, Saturday 8th October,
Saturday 12th November**

2.30-4pm

Wednesday and Friday evenings

Midday service and meditation, followed by tea and a Dharma talk /discussion, evening office.

7.30pm–9.30pm

Sunday mornings

Meditation from 9.30am onwards, followed either by a Ceremony, Dharma discussion or Festival at 11am. It is fine to arrive or leave at 10.45am

9.30am–
12.30pm

Festival mornings

Priory open for meditation from 9.30am, or come at 10.45am for the ceremony.

*Portobello Buddhist Priory is Scottish Charity no. SCO31788
Prior: Reverend Master Favian Straughan*