

# —Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*Summer in a pinewood, Mugla, Turkey  
(with thanks to Rick Woodward)*

## *Calendar of Events*

September-December 2012

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

## — Welcome to all —

**Portobello Buddhist Priory**, a ground floor flat in the Portobello district of Edinburgh, opened in 1998. It is one of a handful of temples in Britain which are affiliated to the Community of Buddhist Contemplatives. The training monastery of the Community at Throssel Hole near Hexham in Northumberland was founded in 1972 by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, an Englishwoman who trained within the Soto Zen tradition at one of its main monasteries in Japan. The resident Prior at Portobello is one of the senior monks from Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey.

The purpose of the Priory is to offer lay training within the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (Soto Zen) to anyone who sincerely seeks to undertake it, and the prior's role is to support such training. The prior and members of the congregation are also involved in activities such as religious education, hospital and prison visiting.

All are warmly invited to join in the Priory's programme of lay practice, the purpose of which is to come to know and live from our True Nature, whose expression is our wise and compassionate living.

*With kindest wishes from Rev Favian, Prior*

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

## - Weekend events at the Priory -

### September 2012

Sunday 16th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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### October

Sunday 14th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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### November

Sunday 18th	Festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment	11am
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### December

Sunday 31st	New Year Festival	7.30- 10.00pm
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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.

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

# Newsletter

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## — Prior's Notes —

**I**n Rev. Master Haryo's latest version of his article 'THE TRUTH OF BEING' he states; **'Truth can become unreachable not because we see it beyond our ability to experience, but because we become satisfied with a conceptual understanding of such truth'**. This is a pretty radical statement when I consider how much of my understanding of the world and of myself comes in the form of constructed stories and the way we communicate with others, consistently using a narrative which reflects the way our memories selectively organise for themed and meaningful personal histories. We seem a remarkably talented species at creating our self-sense and its world views; from the myth making around ancient camp fires to the 21<sup>st</sup> century Hollywood blockbuster, we love to tell the story.

In the same way Rev. Master's article acknowledges the role of the self as a natural and inescapable aspect of human development towards awakening; perhaps we can acknowledge our 'storied' reality in a similar light. As with the self, the story may not be the problem, but our relationship with it. Our stories allow us to construct conceptual maps that can help us negotiate our way in the world. But we can and do forget that both the self and its stories are constructions and processes, that need to be held lightly and at times abandoned in the light of deeper insights.

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**'At best they can only be about our interpretation of this Truth... One dwelling in Truth has no understanding: he or she is the Truth. It is a state of being, not a state of knowing'**.

Buddhism recognises how a 'storied' life, when clung to, becomes a source of suffering. When we identify too strongly with a fixed version of ourselves in the world as, for instance, the victim, we slip into a delusive mind-set and actualize that

view, which denies the deeper truth of our inherent freedom. Buddhism's response is not to offer just another story, a meta-story, such as 'we are all buddhas'; rather it offers a practice that essentially, 'un-stories' the world.

**'There is a gentle but firm attitude of detachment towards the mind and its contents....This effort is, in essence, a bright-minded, voluntary dying to one's entire world of experience. The filters of delusion become lighter and lighter and the potential for a clearer perception of Reality is greater'.**

Perhaps we can say that to be awake is also to use a storied world skilfully. There are good and helpful dharma stories, informed by our practice, that have an open-endedness, that point towards the ungraspable Truth of Being.

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## *Pursuit -*

***The substance of the well known story of the "poetry competition", which led to Hui Neng being recognised as the 6<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of the Zen tradition, is contained within the autobiographical introduction to Hui Neng's Platform Sutra. Being autobiography it reflects Hui Neng's perspective on the events described. Since first reading it I have been intrigued to speculate on the reactions of some of the other participants in this dramatic event. In the following verses I have speculated on the thoughts of one of the Fifth Patriarch's sangha, Monk Ming, who set off in pursuit of Hui Neng who had fled from the monastery on the advice of the Fifth Patriarch.***

1.	
Southwards, in pursuit,	To give both robe and bowl
Week after week,	To that illiterate woodcutter,
Mountains and rivers	That junior rice pounder.
Without end.	
Sleeping at the wayside,	2.
Driven by anguish,	And those verses,
Fed by anger.	Churning my brain with every step.
The Master - how could he!	A simple monk like me, once soldier,
He must have lost his mind	They seriously irritate.

Though Elder Brother's lines  
Seem clear enough.  
For what have I been doing  
All these years but polishing  
The tarnished mirror  
Of my mind.  
The upstart's words confuse me,  
And disturb my sleep.

3.  
Today, toiling upwards,  
Companions far behind,  
Clothes, soaked by dawn mist,  
Dry in the sun.  
Ahead, near the pass, a small figure.  
Can it be he? He seems not to hurry.  
I shall catch him soon,  
If he resists my hard fist will suffice.  
Then, triumphant, I'll return  
Those symbols to their rightful heir.  
Well, that's the picture  
Which has come to mind  
On this tiresome chase.

4.  
But perhaps I've given thought  
Too little and too late,  
Have not foreseen the nature  
Of this fraught encounter,  
Nor sought to understand

My Teacher's motive  
And now there is no time  
For it must be he, the fugitive,  
Close by the cliff ahead.  
A bird cries from the clouded peak,  
Below distant waterfalls,  
Deepen the stillness.

5.  
Yes it is he, stopped to rest.  
Now he's vanished but  
Abandoned on a great slab  
Among the streamside mountain herbs  
The robe and bowl.  
I bend to grasp the robe, 'Dharma's robe,  
But vision darkens, blurs,  
Robe, bowl and stone becoming one,  
My being seized by fearful  
reverence.  
And there he stands,  
The young woodcutter, now Master,  
A silent rock among the boulders.

6.  
Now comes the question,  
From the rock, out of emptiness.  
And the answer?  
I cannot say.  
But nowhere does the mirror rest

On no place does the dust alight  
And in this mandala  
Of cloud and sky,  
Of mountain, stream,  
Rock, robe and bowl,  
Where there is nothing from the first,  
My true self,  
Is manifest.

*Rawdon Goodier*

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### *In the days before meditation....*

**I**n the days before meditation I had a butler called **Betteridge**. He arrived one day when I was overwhelmed with the tasks to be done. One thing in particular was filling me with dread – a phone call to a customer with a long overdue, unpaid bill. Betteridge took over and calmly made the call with sensitivity, politeness and great effectiveness (the bill was paid soon after). He did not stay with me full time but would appear when I was most in need of a calm presence and a helping hand. For example, when rushing around trying to clean the house before visitors arrived, Betteridge would encourage me to carry out a few key jobs and then reassure me that the visitors were actually coming to see me and not the house. If I was struggling to decide what to pack for a trip away with unknown weather conditions, Betteridge would insist that as long as two pants, two pairs of socks, two tops and a toothbrush were in the case, I would have what I needed. When I was nervous about a meeting at work and trying to cram information, he would help me draw a list of the key issues and tell me that I didn't have to know everything. If a difficult relationship was causing upset, Betteridge would gently urge me to listen to the other's point of view and let go of my own need to control the situation. Most impor-

tantly, when I seemed unable to stop doing, Betteridge would sit down and raise his eyebrows at my frantic activity.

I joined the Aberdeen Sangha some ten years ago and have been able to attend with regularity for much of the time since then. As important to me as the regular retreats with Rev. Favian, has been the continuity, stability and wisdom of the local sangha.

Betteridge meantime is in semi-retirement. I seem far more able to take his approach to things, without the need to have him here to help me out.

*(Footnote : Betteridge is a fictional character in Wilkie Collins' story "The Moonstone". In the book he derived calmness from sitting in his armchair, opening his copy of "Robinson Crusoe" and looking for wisdom within. Now, I prefer to think he was just sitting. My own personal Betteridge was a figment of my imagination or maybe some instinctive urge towards discovering Buddha nature?)*

*Jane Stephen*





## *Eilean Shona*

**S**troke by stroke, in rhythm with each wave and each other, we paddled slow, westward along a path of light laid on the water by the setting sun.

Quieter and quieter we moved into our journey, the sounds from where we came, receding, giving way to the welcoming silence of Eilean Shona.

Shy creatures may have noted our arrival, but made no mention, save the chirrup, chirrup of finches flitting through birch and rowan.

We lugged along the path, men laden, amongst the bracken, to the Shepherd's Cottage, that I would have named Foighidneach for her forbearance - waiting to be unlocked, stirred once more with life and laughter, her fires set and the salty air blown through.

Here in a hollow, open ended to the sea we sat as night fell on Eigg and Rum and felt the glorious enfolding weight of an ink-blue blanket, stitched with infinite stars.

In the heat of the morning we climbed the high peak. There was nothing to say as the nameless wonder pervaded and a cooling breeze parted the thin veil. We yearned no more, but yielded to the eternal presence.

To the north and also in the east, mountains going on beyond and the sea in the west shining silver.

*David Campbell*







*Looking south from Beinn Bhailidh, Eilean Shona*

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## *In what distant meadows -*

**I**n what distant meadows have you gone wandering?  
Come back to where you are.  
There is nothing else you are here for.  
This crick in your neck,  
This ache in your back,  
This sun on your face.  
This.

*Rick Woodward*

## *Dalai Lama's visit to Inverness —*



**A**t the Highland Zen Group, we like to maintain friendly connections with other Buddhist groups in the Highland Region. We share a particularly close relationship with Kagyu Samye Dzong, a Tibetan Group based in Inverness. I was very honoured to be asked by Helen MacRae who is the main organizer for Kagyu Samye Dzong if I would represent the Highland Zen Group at a private reception being held for the Dalai Lama after he had given his public talk at Eden Court Theatre in Inverness on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2012.

After a wonderful public talk from His Holiness entitled 'Be the Change', I assembled with Helen and various

councillors and dignitaries in a small room at the back of the theatre where we were greeted by the Dalai Lama. When he arrived at me, I offered him a traditional khata scarf which he blessed and placed round my shoulders. He then noticed my kesa which I had decided to wear for the event. He pointed to the kesa and said "Ah... Japanese style". "Yes, Your Holiness – it is the Soto Zen tradition" I replied. "Ah, Soto Zen" he said. Then he held my hand warmly and with a twinkle in his eye said "Very good". It was a truly wonderful experience and a great honour for Highland Zen Group.

*Calum Finlay*

**New contact details for the Highland Zen group:**

**email: [highland.zen@tesco.net](mailto:highland.zen@tesco.net)**

**tel: Calum on 01463 870331**

## *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

**M**y son Joe recently bought me a **Kindle** and I accidentally bought *Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance*. As I had always meant to read this book I stuck with the choice.

Don't ask me why, but I never thought the book would be about Zen or Motor Cycle Maintenance. I thought it was some sort of quirky title that would reveal an entirely different content. So I was quite surprised and shocked to discover that the book is about Zen and it is about Motor Cycle Maintenance.

If you have never read it, the narrative is about a father taking his son on a month's road trip across America, but the book is really far more philosophical: -

*'We take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness around us and call that handful of sand the world'*

The main character has infinite patience with his motorcycle and lives in the moment as he repairs it, although two travelling companions find this irritating. But he says: -

*'When you want to hurry something that means you no longer care about it and want to get on with other things'.*

I found this book very moving and inspirational and can heartily recommend it. I decided to try and put some of the philosophy behind this book into practice.

Some of you will know that my husband Martin and I own a small boat. Well, I don't have an easy relationship with the engine. In fact I do my best to ignore it – that's Martin's job.

Recently we have been looking at a new, slightly larger boat and we have in fact

bought it. On the day we looked at the boat, and with my new attitude, I decided to be brave and I asked to see the engine. My heart sank! The engine is huge and complicated and has a fly wheel – what is that for? Also there are rows of switches – GPS, Radar, Auto pilot – to name but three. I know now that this is my teaching – but does there have to be so much?

Well, I'm going to take it slowly and I'm going to try and be patient. And you will know when I have succeeded because I will write a sequel – Zen and the Art of Keel Boat Maintenance!

*Pam Strachan*



*Robert Pirsig, author of Zen & The Art of Motorcycle  
Maintenance*



*Thank you to all the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter.  
Deadline for next issue is mid-December 2012.*





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

### **September 2012**

Friday 28th	Aberfeldy group evening	<i>7.30-9pm</i>
Saturday 29th	Dundee group morning	<i>10am-1pm</i>
Sunday 30th	Aberdeen Morning Retreat	<i>10am-1pm</i>

### **October**

Friday 26th	Aberfeldy group evening	<i>7.30-9pm</i>
Saturday 27th	Dundee group morning	<i>10am-1pm</i>
Sunday 28th	Aberdeen Morning Retreat	<i>10am-1pm</i>

### **November**

Friday 23rd	Aberfeldy group evening	<i>7.30-9pm</i>
Saturday 24th	Dundee group morning	<i>10am-1pm</i>
Sunday 25th	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

# — 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.

*Saturday 8th September, 13th October, 10th November.* (There is no introductory afternoon in December.)

*2.30-4pm*

## **Wednesday and Friday evenings**

Midday service and meditation, followed by tea and a Dharma talk /discussion, evening office. *7.30pm-9.30pm*

## **Sunday mornings**

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

*9.30am-  
12.30pm*

## **Festival mornings**

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

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