

—Portobello Buddhist Priory—



A Temple of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives



*'We live in the world as if in the sky'
Sun setting over the River Forth
(photo & caption: Rick Woodward)*

Calendar of Events

January-April 2015

Portobello Buddhist Priory
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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 -

January 2015

Sunday 4th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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February

Sunday 8th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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March

Sunday 8th	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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April

Sunday 5h	Renewal of Precepts	11am
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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 —

Sitting in the Meditation room in the early morning, feeling chilled and wondering if the radiators are working properly, a line from Zen Master Hongzhi comes to mind; *'Empty and desireless, cold and thin, simple and genuine, this is how to strike down and fold up the remaining habits of many life times.'* An initial reaction is a desire for a warm bed and a hot cup of tea. Well, that's pretty straightforward, but as a recent talk reminded us, quite often our reactions can be more subtle arising out of a sense of vulnerability and a need to defend and protect our sense of self.

The defence may relate to some traumatic experience from years ago or an argument we had this morning, but a central feature is often the dis-ease the mind's story revolves around. The heart of our practice involves a deep acceptance of this moment; so instead of turning away to protect ourselves, can we

sit still with the dis-ease of vulnerability when it arises and let it unfold in the open space our acceptance provides?

The resulting insight may reveal the mind's distorted interpretation of vulnerability which is actually an expression of our open and interconnected being. The open boundary of our nature is interpreted, from the narrow self-perspective, as exposure and weakness; while our true interdependence with others can seem, in its mutual responsibility, to limit 'my' freedom to desire.

Continuing the quote of Zen Master Hongzui:

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'when the stains from old habits are exhausted the original light appears, blazing through the skull. Vast and spacious, like sky and water merging during Autumn, like snow and moon having the same colour, this field is without boundary, beyond direction, magnificently one entity without edge or seam.'



The going within and the going without. Ascending and descending, the life of Buddha increases in brilliance and the wheel of the Dharma turns constantly.

Photo: Michael Ladwiniec

Seine Boat

You have seen more than any human,
Your sides worn by time,
The salt becomes a constant companion married with the tide.

Your paint is flaking; your wood is rotting,
But your rider is still persistent,
And the waves will never leave your sight.

Waves fiercely roaring,
Waves tranquil and calm,
What difference does it make?
When you know you're in good hands,
Loyal till you die.

Katie Forsyth
Aged 11



Elliot Forsyth's daughter Katie received a special merit award for this poem in a competition run by the Scotsman in conjunction with the National Gallery of Scotland called '**Inspired? Get Writing!**' The children had to pick a picture from the gallery for inspiration and write about it.

Well done Katie!

Meeting Dogen in the mountains

I first encountered Dogen's writings in 1979, the year I made my first visit to Throssel Hole Priory. However these two events, though both very significant for me, were not directly linked. My life up to that point had been absorbed in climbing mountains, studying and promoting the conservation of their natural history and trying to harmonise this with marriage and supporting a family. However, arising out of my early mountaineering and later conservation concerns I had been asked, in 1976, to contribute a chapter to a book which was later published under the title of *The Mountain Spirit*. This took several years to be completed and find a publisher. In the months before publication I was sent, by one of the editors, a copy of a chapter by another contributor with the comment "this might interest you but I am not sure what our fellow mountaineers will make of it". This was a good question for the text was Carl Bielefeldt's translation of Dogen's Shobogenzo Sansuikyo which had been suggested for publication by the American poet and environment activist Gary Snyder.



My first reaction to the text was one of almost complete bafflement. I had never come across anything like it before. However certain phrases leaped out from it and compelled my interest and continued, though intermittent, engagement in the years which followed.

“Although we say that mountains belong to the country, actually they belong to those who love them.... and when sages and wise men live in the mountains, because the mountains belong to them, trees and rocks flourish and the birds and beasts have a supernatural excellence”

Subsequently I was sent a copy of the richly annotated text of Bielefeldt's thesis. However even now

after more than thirty years I cannot claim complete understanding of this work (or of any Dogen text.) What indeed would complete understanding entail? Perhaps sympathy is more important than understanding. Many years later I encountered Daido Lorie's acknowledgement of the Bielefeldt 'Mountain spirit' article as the stimulus for his study of the Sansuikyo text which led him to conclude that *'in a sense when you really go deeply into it you begin to realise that the Mountains and Rivers are not a sutra about mountains and rivers, but rather that the mountains and rivers are themselves the sutra'* - an interesting thought but perhaps, if we hold too firmly to any interpretation, something is lost.



Having established a link with Throssel Hole Priory in 1977 through subscribing to its newsletter I made my first visit there in the deep snow of early 1979. In so doing I came across other Dogen writings which were less challenging to me as a beginner than the Sansuikyo – I have in mind the Shobogenzo-zuimonki and the Tenzokyokan, the latter in particular making a marked impression on me through conveying of a sense of Dogen's humanity.

There are of course other Dogen texts which feature mountains whether metaphorical or otherwise. I soon came across the Shobogenzo Kesei sanshiki to which I was particularly attracted by its reference to Sotoba and his puzzlement by his teachers insistence that non-sentient as well as sentient beings teach the dharma. Sotoba was a renowned poet of about a century before Dogen and features in many anthologies of Chinese poetry. Sotoba came to his understanding of the teachings of the insentient while walking through the mountains at night and realising that:

*“The voices of the river valley really are
The Buddhas’s wide and long tongue
The forms of the mountains are not other than his Pure Body
Through the night reciting four thousand verses
On another day how can I tell others?”*

In the introduction to his own translation of the Sansuikyo Rev Hubert suggests that within this work the references to mountains signify Zen Masters who are traditionally named after the mountain on which their temple is situated e.g Tozan (Tung Shan). This may well be true but for myself mountains are not fundamentally metaphors but are emphatic manifestations of ‘THIS’ – thisness. One is reminded of the zen parable which concludes that ‘mountains are really mountains and waters are really waters.’

Our affection for mountains can reach so great an intensity that we may seek to deify them. Zen Master Rinzai warns against this emphasizing that ‘*there is no Manjusri on Wutai Shan.*’ Rinzai not only points out this danger but also offers a view of what a true remedy might entail:

‘There is no Manjusri on Wutai Shan – do you wish to know where he is? There is something this very moment at work in you, showing no tendency to waver, betraying no disposition to doubt - this is your living Manjusri. The light of non-discrimination which flashes through every thought of yours – this is your Samantabhadra who remains true all the time. Every thought of yours which, knowing of itself how to break through bondage – this is entering the Samadhi of Avelokitesvara all the time. Each of these functions in harmonious mutuality and simultaneity so that one is three, three is one.

When this is understood you are able to read the scriptures.’

Rawdon Goodier

Some Buddhas are hard to see -

**Some Buddhas are easily recognized.
Some Buddhas are hard to see.**

**We can open our eyes and our heart/mind shows us....
All of Buddha nature.**

**Here and now
Is Buddha.**

**The whole vast entire universe
Is Buddha.**

**Slugs and snails are Buddha.
Amoebas are Buddha.**

**You and I are also Buddha.
No exceptions.**

Kathleen Campbell



Our Harris Retreat —

This September saw a few of us having a second attempt at our Outer Isles retreat on the Isle of Harris. The first attempt in March had come very close but at the last minute was relocated on the mainland due to bad weather and a cancelled ferry. Knowing what it is like travelling to and from the isles, Donaldda, the owner of the accommodation, kindly offered to hold our booking open for us until a later date which then allowed us to have this second attempt.

Once again friends came from far and wide, covering many miles of travel, to make the retreat possible, and we were very fortunate to have both Rev. Favian and Rev. Finnan joining us to lead the retreat too.

At around midday on the Saturday we all met in Inverness city centre and the sky was dry. Some of us were meeting each other for the first time on this retreat and others were pleased to see old friends. I was also very pleased that everyone was able to make it.

The journey carried on towards the Isle of Skye on the west coast, with eight of us in two cars. Crossing the Moray Firth, with an opportunity for some dolphin spotting (no luck, though), we left the flatter, rolling farmlands of Easter Ross and headed to the mountainous west.

After stopping in Kyle of Lochalsh for a leg-stretch and a bite to eat we continued 'over the sea to Skye' and headed north to Uig, where we were due to catch the ferry to Harris. The sky was busy with grey clouds but the sun was always there and often shone through. Indeed, after leaving Uig, the ferry passed straight through a bright beam of sunlight as it shone through a single hole in an otherwise grey sky. This was quickly followed by some lovely pinks and ambers as the sun dropped below our horizon and lit up the underneath of the clouds, before leaving us in darkness.

With a shorter crossing than the ferry to Lewis we were on Harris pretty quickly and able to meet up with Martin at the terminal in Tarbert. Thus we were complete, and set off towards our place in Strond, in the south of Harris. With some surprising, abrupt changes from double track to single track road, both of which were shared with the local sheep, we were glad that Martin was out in front for the last leg of our journey in the dark.

Our accommodation was very 'swish', with all the 'mod cons'. We were pleasantly surprised to find that we even had a separate room for our zendo, which would save a lot of regular furniture shifting - which we have done on past retreats. After finding our rooms, setting up the zendo and enjoying a bowl of pea soup, we discussed the schedule for the retreat and, finally, settled down for some well-earned sleep.

Not too much sleep, though, since we were on retreat! With a six o'clock rise we were able to get a quick coffee/tea and we could see our view from the house starting to appear. It was now *just* possible to see one or two of the many small islands in the Sound of Harris - the stretch of water between Harris and North Uist - upon which the marker lights had flashed all night. After our first sitting and a short morning service the day had arrived proper, and with it a veil of mist that held our full view in mystery.

On occasion, during our day of practice together that Saturday, I reflected on what was possible for friends of like mind to achieve when their hearts



were in it. It seemed no small thing that nine people had come hundreds of miles, zig-zagging across the country, to meet in a small(ish) house in south Harris to practice together. This, in itself, was offering and receiving support at the same time.

We were able to leave the raincoats at home for our little walk along the coastal road at lunchtime. It was a warm, pleasant day and we knew to be grateful for it since you never know what the weather holds on the west coast. It is often possible to have 'rain, hail and shine' on the same day!

With Midday Service and more meditation periods, followed by tea, Dharma talk and discussion, our day together progressed with the mutual support and wish to train that is shared so much at other temples and meeting places around the country. We were then treated by the opportunity to have our evening meal outside - which must be a rare thing in the Highlands at the end of September. With more periods of meditation following, bedtime arrived once again and our lights went out at the house, while the navigation lights continued to blink on and off on the little islands in the Sound.

Monday morning saw us on our cushions as early as the day before. The weather was wet and wild and as I settled down for the first sit, with curtains closed and hearing the wind and rain outside, I wondered what our sight-seeing trip would be like later on. We closed the morning's formal practice with a little ceremony to dedicate the merit of our practice for the good of all beings. Fortunately, by the time we left the zendo and ventured outside things had calmed down and the wind



had dropped considerably.

Luskentyre beach lay to the north, with its 'luminous' sand and before long some of us had taken off our shoes and, leaving them - mindfully - on the grass, were now racing across the beach towards the sea. The tide was out and the beach so flat and expansive that it was difficult to see the sea at all. Others looked into some of the many little blueish pools of water left by the retreating sea which were seemingly devoid of rock, seaweed or life. Upon a closer look, however, I was surprised to find lots of tiny, nearly transparent, fish darting about; worlds within worlds. The sands and beaches on the west of the Outer Isles are known for their beauty but I must admit that although I have seen many a painting and postcard the experience was very different and the contrast of grey skies, green and brown hills and white sand was quite spectacular.



Next we called in at a place called Seallan! and enjoyed a coffee and a blether with the couple that run the exhibition centre there. A trip away wouldn't be the same without some postcards and so some of us found the necessities there before we got back in the car and set off to see St. Clement's Church in Rodel (Roghadal, in Gaelic).

'Rodel church' is quite an imposing building if all you have seen are the small, single storey croft houses on the island. It is built out of Lewisian gneiss and, like many things in the Outer Isles, conveys a feeling of steadfastness. It was built for the MacLeod Chiefs of Harris around 500 years ago. Inside there are tombs created for generations of MacLeod chieftains, the most impressive of which must be the one carved in the wall of the church for the eighth chief, Alasdair Crotach MacLeod. It has various reliefs carved in an arch above his tomb - some worn with the passing of time and others more discernible - and

are testament to his wealth and piety. The building is said to be built upon an earlier religious site and has, in its lifetime, seen many phases with the changing days of the Reformation, fire damage, and being used as a shelter for cows before being renovated in 1873. Lightning then took its toll on the tower at the west end of the church soon after the renovation, and over a century later it is now cared for by Historic Scotland. As we left we were careful to do our bit and closed the gate over the big main doorway 'to keep the sheep out'.

By now the sun was out again and some of us decided to take a nice walk across country to our accommodation while others returned by car. The sunset that evening across the Sound of Harris was quite spectacular and we were able to appreciate it from the house. A little while later we were all sat around the dinner table together and returning to our collective practice with a silent meal. To finish the day we all enjoyed (again) the film Groundhog Day - again (woops, did I say that already?).

Our final morning began with a period of meditation before breakfast and then we started getting our things ready for the journey to the mainland. We got the house ship-shape and after saying cheerio to Martin were in the cars heading north to catch the ferry in Tarbert at eleven o'clock. It was interesting to drive to the ferry in daylight this time, seeing what we had missed on our night-time drive when we first arrived; the mountains in the distance and the wind-scoured rocks with telegraph poles taking phone lines and electricity to somewhere out of sight. And, of course, the sheep, always the endearing and enduring sheep.

As we island hopped, via Skye, to the mainland and then were on the road east, I was moved to consider, once again, the effort we put in to come to train together and some of the other factors involved too. The effort taken for those of us to visit the island is the same as for those of us who must leave the island to join others. And that effort relies on so many other offerings of different kinds. So, for our retreat to have been such a success relied upon much more than just our own efforts, although it would not have been the same without

them. With this reflection came a great sense of gratitude and appreciation.

Having said our fond farewells on the ferry because one car was headed to the ‘far east’ (Aberdeen) and the other just to Inverness, there were then four. When we left Inverness, there were then three. And the next morning, after 11, it was just me. But a grateful me and one that was pleased to have shared another retreat and felt the benefit from coming together as a Sangha. My heartfelt thanks to everyone, who made it what it was.

In gassho,

Shooie



— *Retreat Altar with the Three Homages* —

Inter-connectedness

Aged nine or ten years old I am at Towerbank primary school in Portobello.

Following an absence from school with measles I am in class and called to the headmaster's room in connection with a competition sponsored by a famous breakfast cereal producer for which there was a prize for a story recounting the labours of transforming wheat in the Canadian prairies and bringing it to the breakfast table.

To encourage us in our endeavours we had been given a "help" sheet of useful facts. Lacking initiative, my efforts were a thinly disguised and abridged rephrasing of the 'help' sheet and I entered the headmaster's room thinking that plagiarism was a belting offence!

The headmaster sensed my unease and delivered one of the greatest surprises

of my life by telling me that I had won the prize which was a balsa wood kit for a model aeroplane.

Hours were spent by my father in its making and my brother and I took it to Brighton Place Park (a minute from the Priory) where, propelled by a tightly-wound rubber band, it embarked on its maiden flight which concluded with damage so severe that we buried the remains in between some bushes.

Following a recent trip to Mexico and the ancient site of Teotihuacan I was inspired to make a pyramid to the sun.

Sixty years on and still borrowing the ideas of others !

Ian McPhail



— *Ian's pyramid* —

Visiting Sitting Buddha Hermitage

I got to know Rev Alicia when we worked together as part of the interim board. As the board was winding down Rev Alicia was working on her next project that was to establish an OBC Hermitage. The aim was to provide a supported environment where anyone could stay on a private basis. Although private retreats may be possible at some other temples, as far as I know this is a unique offering, in that it was set up primarily so that lay people could undertake personal retreats.

During the lengthy period when the details of the concept were being worked out by Rev Mugo and Rev Alicia, I enjoyed hearing news about how things were developing. I smiled when I heard that a caravan was to be part of the picture. Once Rev Alicia had the go-ahead and had decided on a suitable area, an amazingly suitable property popped up almost straight away. Nestled in a tree-shrouded bowl, at the head of its own private lake, the Hermitage had just the right facilities for a resident monk and also a sheltered spot for a caravan, just a few feet away. Sometimes you step forward into the unknown and a door opens...

I live by myself, and quite a lot of my time is spent alone, so a private retreat had never really appealed to me. However, I made a rash promise that I would visit Rev Alicia at some point when she had things up and running. If I had not made that commitment, it is unlikely that I would have made the effort to visit. I had set aside time this autumn for a more contemplative period in my life, and as well as visiting Throssel and taking part in the Highland retreat on the Island of Harris, I planned to spend a few days with my sister in the North West. Wirksworth is only another 40 miles, so it seemed like a good time to drop by for a couple of nights.

I had seen pictures of the property and the caravan, so had some idea what to expect. As the 'how to get there' instructions had been mangled by my dodgy printer, I took a few wrong turns before cautiously heading up the very last of the lanes that might lead to the driveway. Around a bend, up a slight rise and there across the wide expanse of the lake, the Hermitage and caravan came into sight, folded into a runnel in the landscape. I drove straight to the door. Although just on the edge of Wirksworth, the site enjoys

complete privacy.

After tea and welcome Rev Alicia showed me the caravan. Walking in, immediately I felt at home. Growing up, caravans had featured in family holidays, and I enjoy camping in the mountains. I love the sound of rain on the roof, how things fold away or change into something else, the sense of security that comes from being snug, even though you seem to be closer to the elements. The caravan has everything, including heaters, a cooker, a place for meditation, a bed that need not be folded away and a toilet. Full bathroom facilities are available in the Hermitage.

I arrived with a completely open mind about what to do with my time, and tried to avoid any planning whatsoever. It seemed in keeping with the spirit of Sitting Buddha to just turn and to allow things to unfold. This is not my normal approach to things, as I am the type that feels most comfortable when I have a list of things to do.

I spent the afternoon ‘arriving’ and settling into the space. The whole site has ‘presence’, and there was a sense of being held, both in time and space, so that things could just unfold as they needed to. I had arranged to have my evening meal with Rev Alicia, and by then it seemed clear that I should spend some quiet time in the caravan. Rev Alicia tactfully left it to me to bring up how I would spend my time, so I arranged that I would join her for morning and evening meditation and meals, but otherwise have quiet time. We also arranged to take a walk together before I left.

There is a beautiful Buddha statue on the parapet above the lake, just outside the door of the Hermitage where Rev Alicia offers a stick of incense in the morning and evening. As I joined in each morning to hold aloft and then place my own stick, it seemed as if the whole world was involved, as the trees, the watery moorhen sounds and the sky, vibrant with morning, shimmered both without and within. I spent my quiet time sitting in the caravan, doing walking meditation around the lake and reading. Although I had never done an “official” private retreat before, it seemed very comfortable just to relax into the quietness and sense of freedom that came with just being with what was there.

Having experienced what you could call a “taster” session for what is on offer at the Hermitage, I definitely plan to go back. Although tempted to plan for the full Monty of being completely self sufficient in the caravan for a few days, I think the openness of just turning up and responding to whatever presents itself is the best approach for me.

Although I took my meals with Rev Alicia, there is also the possibility to cook in the caravan or to collect your meals from the kitchen. I chose to join Rev Alicia for morning and evening meditation, but it would also be possible just to stay in the caravan. Because there are such a wide range of ways in which a stay at the Hermitage could be structured, I think it is of great value to the lay sangha. As well as providing a venue for private retreats there is also the possibility of using the Hermitage for respite time for those who are heavily engaged in caring for others, or just very busy and need a break. It struck me that it would also be possible to have a contemplative stay that incorporated some creative work such as painting, craft work or writing.

Although I did not make use of it, there is a summer house by the lake which has been converted to a Kanzeon shrine. It looks like a beautiful place to sit and could be used for day retreats. (If people wanted to car share, it would be possible for 2 -3 people to sit in the shrine). There is also a guest bedroom in the Hermitage which women guests can use as well as the caravan. If you have the opportunity to drop by, even just for a couple of hours, it is well worth a visit.

Bob McGraw



Buddha *Nature*

At a number of the recent Wednesday Dharma evenings we've touched on the topics of nature, science, the cosmos, the big-bang, and related all this somehow to our practice. I've found these discussions particularly interesting as they have struck a chord with some things I've recently been learning and reflecting on in this space.

Having never studied biology or had much more than a rudimentary appreciation of living things, I've been finding myself astonished by how the natural world increasingly gets by quite nicely all by itself e.g.

- Plants can take energy from the sun, CO₂ from the air and water from the soil to produce the food we eat and the oxygen we breathe. A seamless process that renders man-made equivalents such as solar panels clunky despite their ingenuity on a human level.
- The building block instructions for a living thing are contained within the DNA which resides within the chromosome of an individual cell.
- Processes of evolution and natural selection have enabled the creation of a vast array of living things from the blank canvas post big bang.

Nature does its own thing, it does it very well and it does it in its own time.

So how does all this pondering relate to my practice? On the one hand it makes me think that nature, life and existence, of which I am a part, will take care of itself and all I need

to do is somehow to get myself out of the way and nature will do its job very well, thank you very much. But then I think, get myself out of the way, what does that mean?

The trouble is, at this point, it starts turning to concepts and ideas. My particular understanding of what true nature is will undoubtedly be different from my neighbours. There is no point artificially trying to be natural. I feel I just have 'to be' and this is where meditation and practice helps me to be more natural and for Buddha Nature to unfold without giving it too much thought, ceasing from erudition and withdrawing within, as Dogen encourages in *Rules for Meditation*, and, as per all living things, responding to and adapting to my environment as best I can.



Michael O'Hara

A Solitary Experience

Sitting on the porch of Vajra Shieling on the Braes on Balquidder, the air is still, the loch below, a black mirror reflecting the haunch of the hill beyond, caressed by gentle mist, cold and swirling. Away in the west the cooling winter sun blushes the cheeks of plump clouds.

It seems natural to seek affirmation in such moments, affirmation that we belong in such places and are part of the life it holds; we might feel spiritually uplifted, calmed and connected, a small part of a great continuing cosmic expansion. From this viewpoint, there is the mountain, here I am - validated.

The wind whispers amongst a grove of bone-white birch and stunted oak, coaxing a single leaf to let go. Guided gently it settles in the grass waiting with the others, passing from life to death, willingly offering sustenance to nurture new life to come.

Each day passes and flows without speech or eye contact, but with a growing, busy, quiet joy. Moving from activity to activity, solitude in action. In being alone, not in loneliness, I find a zeal for the practice of the Dharma. The simplicity of life reduced to meditation, reading, walking and drawing, the careful preparation and enjoyment of food, eating with real gratitude. In this simple solitary life (albeit for only a short period), our training reveals how deeply interconnected and interdependent we are. Not just a connection between sentient beings but all things - the trees and the grass and the rocks, the water and the air and within this dynamic present we can begin to forget the self and be actualised by the myriad things.

Through the pinewoods behind the cabin, following the deer track, marked by pine marten spoor studded ruby red with rowanberries. Walking meditation, wondering - how can Buddha Nature be impermanence and unchanging at the same time? In what way is Buddha Nature sacred and holy? I continue to walk upwards beyond the forest track and after an hour arrive at a sheep pen where the path gives way to the high moors and a ridge of connecting hills stretching northwards over to Glen Dochart.

The Trossachs hills are wet in November and the water finds the best routes, coursing down sheep tracks and saturating the peatbogs. The Stob is the highest peak in the range and it is a sucking squelching trudge to gain the firmer higher ground. The deer hear and see me long before I am aware of them be-

hind the mist and I only catch ghostly glimpses as they retreat silhouetted against the pale slate sky.

Breathless I stop on a small promontory just short of the top and in homage to the mountain make an offering of part of my lunch and a splash of tea. I unfasten my jacket and let the wind hold me with cold cleansing hands. I turn my face north then west, raise my arms and reach through the clouds to the still blue sky above. With nothing to grasp I am extinguished, scattered and blown away, called back, re-made. I am rooted here in the world, cultured in uncertain faith, risen from black soil and wet rock.



Vajra Shieling

Buddha nature is impermanence and Buddha nature is the unchanging holy truth of the universe, the immutable and absolute compassionate reality of our lives. We can trust Buddha nature because it is always the same, ever changing. We have always been part of the truth; we have nothing to fear in emptiness. Beyond delusion we have no separate self but emptiness does not deny the reality of our individual, unique and real existence, in full acceptance of life and death we can live in present joy with compassion for all things.

I make my way down the hill by almost the same route I ascended. Back at the shieling I change out of my wet clothes, drink tea, sit in meditation, cook some food and watch the sun set, nothing special, wholly wonderful, deep settling tranquillity. From this viewpoint there is no mountain, there is no me and then there is the mountain, here I am.

Tomorrow I will leave this place, but tonight I am not yet ready to surrender my solitude, I let it cut deeper and season me and I rest, tired in peace.

David Campbell

— *50th edition of the Newsletter* —

Observant sangha members may have noticed that the next edition of the Newsletter will be the 50th!

Offerings of articles, photographs, drawings or any other material are especially invited to mark this small staging post in the life of the Scottish sangha.

Please add to your New Year resolutions!



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





- Events elsewhere in Scotland with the Prior -

February 2015

Saturday 21st	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 22nd	Aberdeen morning retreat	10am-1pm

March

Friday 27th	Aberfeldy	7.30-9pm
Saturday 28th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 29th	Aberdeen morning retreat	10am-1pm

April

Friday 24th	Aberfeldy	7.30-9pm
Saturday 25th	Dundee group morning	10am-1pm
Sunday 26th	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 -	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.

Saturday 10th January, 14th February, 14th March, 11th April

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*