THE MIDDLE WAY

Journal of The Buddhist Society

The 90th Anniversary of The Buddhist Society
1924–2014

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by Dr Desmond Biddulph  Wednesday 27 May at 6.30 p.m.

Coming to Be, Ceasing to Be.
This issue commemorates the ninetieth year of the Society’s history going back to 1924. In this relatively short time in terms of the history of Buddhism, Monasteries, Viharas, and Buddhist centres have sprung up all over England, representing new native initiatives, as well as training monasteries from all over the Buddhist world from all the major Buddhist traditions. Universities have departments dedicated to the history of Buddhism and Asian Studies and there is an ever expanding understanding of the contribution Buddhism has made to world history and art. The ‘mindfulness movement’ has now also taken its place amongst the many offshoots derived from the insight gained and transmitted from the Buddha’s original awakening. Every week many dozens of books on Buddhism are published in English and other western European languages and the World Wide Web is covered with Buddhist sites and information.

The contents of this issue are somewhat parochial in nature relating as they do to the rather narrow group of people and events over the last century that created the causes and conditions that allowed the Buddha Dharma to flourish as much as it has here in the UK. The anecdotal nature should not obscure the very real insight that underlies it. The Buddha saw into the heart of our suffering, recognized the cause, and offered a practical solution to it that can be realized, if practiced, in this life. The Society will continue to publish and make known the teachings of the Buddha, and will continue to encourage the practice of the teachings by all the methods available to it, and will try and reach as wide an audience as possible.

Traditionally, going back to the beginnings of the Buddha’s ministry the ‘unrest of the elements’ was seen as a symptom of our dis-ease. We might say ‘the restless and unhappy heart,’ unsatisfied and always seeking release in objects. The Buddha found a solution to this and, as he was eager to stress, we should not just take his word for it, but should have a go at seeing if his practical solution would work for us too. This ‘take it or leave it’ stance came from a heart overflowing with warmth and happiness that by its very nature shares, radiates and shines forth in its luminescence, and neither grasps nor seeks to hold to anything, particularly to proselytising for new disciples. It flowed from his own realized human nature. The Society strives on mindfully into a new decade, in the footsteps of the Buddha to the best of its ability, with attention with caution and with care.
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The Buddhist Society at Ninety
Dr Desmond Biddulph
From a public talk given at the Buddhist Society in April 2014

This article covers a thin slice of history, recalling friends we have known and whom the Society has been associated with for almost a century. It is a tribute to the people who put in such enthusiastic work many years ago, and more recently, as we celebrate the ninetieth anniversary of the Buddhist Society.

The Society’s prehistory goes back to the nineteenth century, and I would like to begin by mentioning the Theosophical Society. It was and is a strange and interesting Society, that has a global multinational reach. It did an enormous amount in its own way to bring Eastern culture to the West, but it did not necessarily follow either a strictly intellectual or an entirely comprehensible approach. The two things we can say about its members is that they were true seekers after understanding, knowledge, wisdom and compassion and that, most of all, they wanted to solve the problem of human existence. They did this in their own idiosyncratic manner, and some of them have taken much criticism from academics. However, we are not interested in that. We are interested in the heart of these people and in what motivated and inspired them and what ultimately came out of the work and commitment they made in their individual lives, and their devotion.

The Buddhist Society’s roots are in the Theosophical Society. Some years ago, when we were doing renovation work here, it was decided to clean the Buddha-rupa in the shrine room. When it was emptied out, to some people’s horror a photograph of Madame Blavatsky was found inside. This caused consternation among some members of the Council but it was stealthily put back in again.

The three objects of the Theosophical Society are to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour; to encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy and science; and to explore the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity. These are clearly worthy goals, and it would be good if more of us could put more effort into attaining them.

Let us explore the history of the Theosophical Society a little more, starting with Madame Blavatsky. She was born in 1831 in present-day Ukraine. There were two sides to her family: one was Russian nobility; the other was German nobility. Indeed, one of her ancestors on the Russian side was Rurik, considered the founder of the Russian state. Blavatsky’s parents were provincial governors, and she was expected to marry into the nobility, to produce lots of children and to serve as an
adornment for her husband. But she would have none of that. Entering a sham marriage to a much older man when she was in her early twenties, she escaped by night and set off on her travels, which, over the next 20 years, took her to the Middle East, the Far East, America and apparently even Tibet. Blavatsky was certainly eccentric but she was also an extremely sincere and earnest seeker.

She met Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in America in 1874. He was a distinguished American military officer and solicitor who took part in the civil war. He became interested as a journalist in séances and the spiritualist movement. This interest took him to the home of two brothers known for their séances, where Madame Blavatsky also found herself. When the pair met, it was like the meeting of two minds. They discovered that they had much in common and they founded the Theosophical Society, which was to have enduring consequences.

They both were very interested in Buddhism. Blavatsky had discovered much about Buddhism on her travels, and the pair converted to Buddhism while they were in America. They then decided to take a trip to India and Sri Lanka. Known then as Ceylon, Sri Lanka had been a Buddhist country since almost the time of the Buddha and in recent centuries had been occupied by various colonial powers: the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British. Different brands of Christianity had been forced on the population, and the country held its own culture in low esteem. When Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott arrived in Colombo in 1880, a huge crowd greeted them. The pair then formally took the Buddhist precepts with the Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thero.

This was a very important event, both for Sinhalese nationalism and the national Buddhism. With their conversion, the Sri Lankan population came to realize that they had been the bearers of the truth of the Dharma for centuries, something that had been totally undervalued by the colonial powers. Not entirely fortunately, Buddhism became a centre around which Sri Lankan nationalism began to crystallize. Both Olcott and Blavatsky left a lasting mark on Sri Lankan Buddhism and national life. Olcott founded 30 colleges, including the Ananda College in Colombo and the Mahinda College in Galle, which taught in the vernacular and also taught Buddhism. He went on to found the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, in southern India. To this day, there is an imposing statue of Col. Olcott outside the main railway station in Colombo.

An important figure in bringing Buddhism to the West is Anagarika Dharmapala, previously Don David Hewavitarne (1864–1933). He attended several Christian schools when he was growing up in Sri Lanka but became interested in Buddhism as a consequence of Blavatsky and Olcott’s activities. Dharmapala founded the Maha Bodhi Society,
which ultimately gave rise to the London Buddhist Vihara. This year is the 150th anniversary of Anagarika Dharmapala’s birth, which will be celebrated by the Buddhist Society along with the London Buddhist Vihara.

Dharmapala was dedicated to propagating Buddhism in the West and also worked to restore important Buddhist sites, including the site of the Buddha’s Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, whose renovation was undertaken by Sir Alexander Cunningham of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1883. Dharmapala had been shocked at the deplorable state of the site, a place that commemorated one of the great events of civilization, and set about forming a society that would renovate it.

Another visitor to Bodh Gaya was Sir Edwin Arnold, who went there in 1880. Arnold won the Newdigate Prize for poetry while at Oxford University. After working as a teacher in Birmingham, he was appointed as the principal of the Government Sanskrit College at Poona in India, where he remained for seven years. During that time, he was exposed to Brahmanic philosophy and Buddhism. In 1879, he wrote *The Light of Asia*, a poetic work about Gautama Buddha that had a very profound effect on Western society. The book brought Buddhism to the man in the street for the first time. Many people have criticized *The Light of Asia* because it Christianizes the figure of the Buddha, but it nonetheless remains an inspiring text that does get some of the essence of the Buddha, in particular his warmth and love.

Arnold apparently had a habit of hiding jewels, rubies, pearls and so on, around his house. His chair is in the possession of the Buddhist Society, and a journalist from the *Daily Telegraph* once visited the society – Arnold was himself formerly an editor of that newspaper. Convinced that there might be a jewel secreted in the chair, he spent a whole afternoon trying to pull it apart! He didn’t find one, but perhaps the real jewel that Sir Edwin left us is the jewel of the Dharma, which he brought to the West in a new way.
The next important figure is Ananda Coomaraswamy, who was educated in London and trained as a geologist. Gradually in his life he became quite interested in Indian philosophy and art and in Buddhism. Coomaraswamy was perhaps the first person to emphasize the symbolic nature of much Buddhist iconography. Early imagery of the Buddha depicts him as an empty throne, as a wheel or as footsteps, images that point towards something else, beyond the Buddha himself. Coomaraswamy wrote a book that was to have a profound effect on Christmas Humphreys, the founder of the Buddhist Society, but I shall come to that later.

Another important figure is Ananda Metteyya. Although he was educated as a Roman Catholic, he became interested in non-Christian ways to salvation. He was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a group that also included W. B. Yeats and Aleister Crowley, whom I once had the dubious pleasure of meeting when I was a little boy. During the Second World War, my mother and I lived in a boarding house, and Crowley lived in the room next door. I am told that when I first met him, I screamed in horror! But very soon after that, I was sitting on his knee. Ananda Metteyya however wasn’t taken in by Crowley for too long, for he went to Sri Lanka, where he became a practitioner of Yoga, and next to Burma, where he was ordained as a Buddhist monk.

Next is the Venerable Tai Hsu, who was the third Buddhist missionary to come to England and is acclaimed by many as a leading figure in the revival of Buddhism in China. Tai Hsu was a friend of Christmas Humphreys and gave money to the Buddhist Society at a time when it was really struggling.

This is a picture (left) of the journal Buddhism in England from 1932, with contributions from D.T. Suzuki, Beatrice Lane Suzuki and H. P. Blavatsky. One can see that the Buddhist Society was still involved with Theosophy at that time. And (left) The Middle Way 2014.
Next is Francis Story (Anagarika Priyadarshi Sugatananda), an Englishman born in London in 1910. He lived in India as voluntary worker for the Maha Bodhi Society, of which he was a life member. For 25 years, he lived in Asia and studied the Buddha’s philosophy. He was a founder of the Burma Buddhist Franciscan rite for blessing animals in the tradition of St Francis. During his several years in Rangoon, he founded the Burma Buddhist World Mission in 1950. He was a contributor to several Buddhist periodicals and in 1951 wrote *Buddhism Answers the Marxist Challenge*. He lectured on Buddhism in Singapore and in Penang in Malaysia. He passed away aged 61 in London.

Bhikku Uthittila, our next figure, was born in 1896. He was a Burmese scholar who spent his life studying the Abhidhamma Pitaka. With the contribution of people such as him, Buddhism in the UK began to lose its more romantic and emotional aspects, revealing more of the adamantine structure of Buddhist philosophy.

In summary, early Buddhism in the West was made up of scholars, romantics, and enthusiasts who felt there was something of value outside the Judaeo Christian tradition. They were attracted to the Theosophical Society as a locus of common interests. Translations such as Max Muller’s Sacred Books of the East and Rhys Davids’ Pali canon, as well as some brave souls who were prepared to be ordained and return, enabled what Buddhism was, rather than what people thought it was to emerge. Sir Edwin Arnold, Alan Bennett and Anagarika Dharmapala, as well as Christmas Humphreys our founder and D.T. Suzuki were instrumental in this.

Here is a fine picture of his Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1958. A year later, 30 March 1959, he left Tibet after the uprising against the Chinese occupation. Along with ordained trained Tibetan Buddhists coming to
the West came a great deal of translations, rituals, meditation techniques and so on. If one looks now at Buddhism, many people consider themselves Buddhist because they have heard the Dalai Lama speak. It is through much of his work that he has been able to transfer something of the essence of Buddhism to a mass audience all over the world. Christmas Humphreys suggested at the Buddha Jayanti in 1958 that he should become our patron, as he felt it might protect His Holiness a little bit against the Chinese if he were a patron of a Western institution.

This picture is of Christmas Humphreys with Anagarika Govinda (1898–1985), who was a great eccentric and a great truth seeker. German in origin, while recuperating from TB after the First World War he became absorbed in spiritual matters and after reading Schopenhauer he was drawn towards Buddhism. He had read Novalis and spent time in Capri, home of Axel Munthe, there he became interested in Theravada Buddhism, later spending time in Sri Lanka he became a representative of the IBU and met Anagarika Dharmapala, who persuaded him not to ordain. Interned during the Second World War in India with Nyanaponica and Nyantiloka both German, he converted to Tibetan Buddhism after meeting with Toma Geshe Rinpoche also known as Lama Ngwang Kalzang. Govinda wrote some wonderful and inspiring books on Buddhism, and many people have come to Buddhism through reading his work. After his marriage to the Parsi artist Ratti Petit he was inundated with visitors in India. It was here he met Timothy Leary, R D Laing, Robert Thurman, John Blofeld, Gary Snyder and many others. He was a very colourful and inspiring figure although not entirely orthodox.

This is a good picture of Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong Tulku Rinpoche (page opposite). They were accompanied by many gifted Tibetan Monks who came West including Chime Rinpoche, still a good friend of the Society. The Tibet Society was founded shortly after his Holiness left Tibet in 1959 by a number of philanthropic souls in the UK, including Francis Beaufort-Palmer and Hugh Richardson. Initially, they had nowhere to house it, but Christmas Humphreys suggested that they
come to Eccleston Square, where they set up their office in the basement. Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong formed Samye Ling Tibetan Monastery and Buddhist Temple in Scotland, and then Trungpa went to America – and you probably know the history of controversies and incidents. But before one is too critical of him, one should remember the journey he had through his life; it was extremely difficult. And he founded a movement that has many adherents and he did bring the Dharma to an enormous number of people. We also know the tragic end of Akong Rinpoche: sadly, he was murdered in China.

D T Suzuki. He had a profound effect on the spread of Buddhism in the United States, mainly because of his unique appreciation of Buddhism and his understanding of Western philosophy. His teacher was Soen Shaku, master of Engaku-ji temple in Kitti Kamakura Japan. When Soen Shaku had finished his training at a Rinzai Zen monastery and was ordained, he went to Sri Lanka and studied Pali and learned about the Southern tradition. He was invited to the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, there he met Paul Carus who had married into the Heggelar family and was the heir not only to a mining fortune but also the Open Court Publishing Company. Paul Carus asked Soen Shaku for some help in translating and he suggested a very bright and intelligent student at Tokyo University, the young D.T. Suzuki, who spoke English very well.

Suzuki's personality and deep understanding of Western philosophy and Mahayana Buddhism enabled him to express a feeling of what Buddhism was in its essence. He had a profound influence not only on intellectuals but on artists and Beatniks alike, but I don't think this can have been entirely through his writings, which are quite dense and require a background in Western philosophy in order to understand them. It was actually his presence that influenced people. Christmas Humphreys met Suzuki at the World Congress of Religions here in London in 1936. Suzuki’s effect on Humphreys was immediate, to the extent that he ceased instantly to be a Southern Buddhist and became part of the Mahayana movement.
THE MIDDLE WAY

Here (pictured right) is Christmas Humphreys and D.T. Suzuki with his assistant Mihoko Okamura, who during the Second World War was in a Japanese internment camp in the High Sierras in California. On reaching New York after the end of the war, she met Suzuki and became his assistant and travelling companion. She now lives in Kyoto.

Here (below right) is the Venerable Myokyo-ni, Dr Irmgard Schloegl as she was then formerly known, who went to Japan in 1960 and spent 12 years in a Rinzai Zen monastery, undergoing the full formal training there.

Here is Alan Watts (above left). He was a schoolboy at King’s School, Canterbury in Kent when he started corresponding with Christmas
Humphreys, who took him to be a house-master by the authoritative tone of his letters. Watts was an editor of *The Middle Way* and afterwards went on to have a very colourful and interesting career in America.

I want to say a few things about Christmas Humphreys (*pictured right*), because this is Founder’s Day, his day. He was born in the year Queen Victoria died, 1901, a time when Britain was perhaps at its most confident – the early Edwardian period. Educated at Malvern College, he went to Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Later, he become a barrister, Queen’s Counsel and judge in a very distinguished career at the Bar.

Causes and conditions brought him to Buddhism, specifically the sudden death of his elder brother Richard at the front in 1917. During a lull in the fighting, a shell went off that killed him, but the man standing next to him, his orderly, was untouched. Humphreys became so ill and distraught at the news of Richard’s death that he was removed from school. He had been brought up a Christian and thought of Jesus as ‘a sort of super Boy Scout’, as he says in his memoirs. But all that fell apart, and soon he read *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* by Coomaraswamy, which had been published in 1916.

The purpose of the book was to ‘set forth as simply as possible the gospel of Buddhism according to the Buddhist scriptures, and to consider the Buddhist systems in relation, on the one hand, to the Brahmanical systems in which they originated, and, on the other hand, to those systems of Christian mysticism which afford the nearest analogies’ (Humphreys, *Both Sides of the Circle*, p. 32). The book talked about the Upanishads and the origins of the Buddha Dharma and tried to link Buddhism with Christian mysticism. And Humphreys, on reading it, decided that ‘If that is Buddhism, then whatever else I am’ – and he was many other things – ‘I am a Buddhist.’ And from that moment, he set out on the path to found the Buddhist Society.

This purpose emerged from a great deal of unhappiness and misery. If you read his autobiography carefully and look at his writings on how his life actually developed, you can see that throughout that period his heart was never really at peace. Although he read the book by Coomaraswamy and it gave him much comfort, he speaks of wandering along the street when he was at university asking himself, ‘What’s it all about, what’s it all about?’ So he was still taxed by doubts. But this is a very good thing because only if you are really taxed by these questions, only if these things really do get to you, are you able to undertake any
sort of path to discovery. If you are never faced with a question of that kind, will you ever look? You probably won’t, and there is nothing wrong with that. But doubt and unhappiness giving rise to great things is a constant theme in human life; we see it everywhere. In Humphreys’ case, his early life had been a paradise of enjoyment: being the younger son, his mother took him everywhere and spoiled him terribly, but the sudden death of his elder brother led him to deeply question what life is about.

He went on to join the Theosophical Society and to found the Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society, which eventually became the Buddhist Society. As those of you who knew him can attest, he was a lovely man, always extremely welcoming and cheerful. He never said anything negative about anyone. In fact, he rarely ever said anything negative about the people he convicted!

Here is John Blofeld (right), who wrote some twenty books on Buddhist subjects and Asian culture. He spent much of his life in the Far East and did a very good job of popularizing Chinese Buddhism and Taoism and attended our Summer Schools.

And this is Edward Conze (left), an Anglo-German scholar who brought the Prajna-paramita literature to the West. He was more or less self-trained and was a brilliant translator who contributed a great deal to the life of the Buddhist Society. Eric Cheetham became his student and in turn became an influential figure in the Society, producing many books that we still use in our teaching syllabus.

This is Geshe Tsultim Gyeltse (left), who used to teach at the Summer School. He was one of the first monks to come to the UK after the Tibetan uprising against China in 1959. He used to look after Tibetan children at the Pestalozzi school, and eventually went to America.

This is Venerable Myokyo-ni with Soko Morinaga Roshi (pictured on facing page), who
was the head monk at Daitoku-ji temple when she trained there, returned and founded Shobo-an and Fairlight in the Rinzai Zen Tradition. Soko Roshi came over here and gave very interesting talks, teishos and so on at our Summer Schools in the 1980s and early 1990s. And here is Trevor Leggett (below left), who was a very significant figure in bringing Eastern ideas to the West, particularly through judo and the martial arts. And here is John Snelling (below centre), at one time the general secretary of the Buddhist Society, and Mike Hookham (below right), who went on to be ordained in the Kagyu-Nyingma tradition.

Venerable Tairo Sato, probably the very last disciple of D.T. Suzuki, arrived in England to give a series of talks on Buddhist Philosophy and has fortunately for us stayed, founding the Three Wheels Temple here in London, a branch of Shogyoji Temple in Japan. So now we have most of the living traditions of Buddhism available to all. Theravada traditions from South and East Asian countries, The Forest Tradition of Northern Thailand, Tibetan Buddhism in all its schools and traditions and Zen and Pure Land too. We are spoilt for choice.

The arrival of monks in the forest tradition of Thailand, students of Ajahn Cha, dramatically changed the Buddhist landscape. Here is
Ajahn Sumedho an American Monk (right), many people were able to understand directly the Buddha’s teachings through his wonderful talks and he went on to found Chithurst Forest Monastery and then Amaravati on the way briefly being the President of the Society. A companion from Thailand, Venerable Ajahn Kemmadhamo, an Englishman, founded the Prison Chaplaincy.

The picture (above) is of High Leigh, which is where the Buddhist Society used to hold its summer schools in the early days.

At the heart of our difficulties lies a problem identified by our founder the historical Buddha and solved by him in his own life time. During his long teaching life he did his best to convey to anyone interested in listening, the way to solve that problem. In the millennia that have followed, this message has been enriched and transformed to best meet the needs of each succeeding generation. The problem that Shakyaumini identified is as present today as it was in his day and the preoccupation with ‘me my and mine’ is as relevant as ever. Human selfishness and greed driven by blind ignorance comes at an enormous
price, one that all of must pay no matter how virtuous. It has always been thus, despite this the Buddha the dharma and the teachings do offer a true refuge and place of safety no matter the circumstances. In the days of the Buddha’s life and the years after his death wars raged and empires came and went; the texts hardly mention these events at all.

The human heart remains the same, and we need not be concerned with social and other change, we live in an interconnected world and even the movement of a butterfly wing can bring great changes across continents. Looking to the place where our own feet stand and working out our own burden and finding fulfilment in that, is the greatest gift we can give to both ourselves and humanity and the environment at large. The key has been the active and generous help and participation that has come from all the members throughout the relatively short history of the Society – long may it last . . . and be a refuge for all who come to seek peace of heart in the teachings and practice of the Dharma.
The Buddhist Society contributes to inter-faith endeavours. This is a picture of Rowan Williams. The Rt Revd Rowan Williams was the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury when he visited the Buddhist Society. We along with Ajahn Amaro, abbot of Amaravati, Geshi Tashi of Jamyang and Mrs Darcy Biddulph had the opportunity of holding an inter-faith discussion with him in the chair. We looked at the Heart Sutra, the Metta Sutta and so on. It is said, when the philosophers meet there is much argument, but when the practicers meet there is much nodding of heads in agreement.

Looking at the results of the 2011 British census, we can see that 59 per cent of people consider themselves to be Christian; no-religion is

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The Buddhist Society
Patron: His Holiness the Dalai Lama

FOUNDER’S DAY MEETING

Commemorating the work of Christmas Humphrey’s
Founder of the Buddhist Society

Saturday 25 April

FOUNDER’S DAY PROGRAMME

11 a.m. ‘A Welcome Talk’

12 p.m. Lunch (tea and coffee available, please bring sandwiches)

1.15 p.m. – 2.15 p.m. Meditation
(This is unsupervised. Those wishing to sit can begin earlier if preferred.
Advice given to inexperienced sitters if required.)

2.15 p.m. – 3 p.m. Open Period The Library will be available

3 p.m. ‘A Founder’s Day Talk’
See web-site
www.thebuddhistsociety.org for details

4 p.m. Reception and light refreshments in the Library
(an opportunity to socialize and meet the guest speakers.)
Everyone is welcome.
welcome to come throughout the day.

The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH
http://www.thebuddhistsociety.org
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25 per cent; Muslim is almost five per cent; and it is said that there are about a quarter-million Buddhists, less than half a per cent (0.4), in UK.

But what we should be considering are the contributions of the various people I have mentioned, and not so much what they said, because in its early days Buddhism as we know it now was not really understood. What was communicated by early figures such as Blavatsky was their dedication and sincerity in pursuit of the truth. And even if what they said sounded strange at times, eventually it became transformed by the Dharma. The Dharma as it infiltrated or fused with these early seekers after truth had an extraordinary invigorating effect.

Now all the schools of Buddhism are established in the UK and have monastic representation. We also possess all the sutras, which have been translated into English, and one can go to talks and summer schools here and all over the West. But the Dharma is still not institutionalized. It still exists in a very fresh and open medium, in a community of intellectuals, truth-seekers and romantics, including people from the past, musicians, poets, teachers and charismatic leaders like the Dalai Lama. In America, for example, if someone is asked what school of Buddhism they belong to, they might say that they went to a Theravada session last week and are going to a Zen session next week – there is no sense of streaming.

For Buddhism to really take hold, it is necessary for people to undergo a proper training, to go right through their difficulties and obstructions; and it is very difficult to do that without the aid of one of the main traditions, in which all these difficulties have been encountered many times before. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Buddhism does seem to be catching on in the West, and certainly we need it. We need people to be able to step aside, to put their own personal interests away and to look at what is actually going on in the world, to act skilfully and wisely and not leave a devastated world for the generations that follow us. Institutions such as the Buddhist Society are a vehicle for people who want to train, who want to go through a personal process of transformation. Here you can find everything that you might need: the teachers are here; you can practise and meditate; you can join any of the schools and can read as much as you like among a society of friends.

The Buddhist Society is now establishing itself on the internet and contributing to civic life through inter-faith projects and public meetings and also through the chaplaincy movement. It is endorsing a project for chaplains in the armed services and so on. It is hoped that little by little, the teachings of the Dharma will spread out and that succeeding generations will continue the work carried out with such enthusiasm by all those early pioneers and especially our founder Christmas Humphreys.
In 1983 our friend Christmas Humphreys died again. ‘Dying again’ and ‘Being born again’ were favourite terms of his, and he was quick to cut across the notion of life and death as a pair of opposites: ‘Birth and death are the opposites, Life transcends both.’

In 1924 he accepted that his Dharma for this life was working in the West ‘to publish and make known the principles of Buddhism, and to encourage the study and application of those principles’. To this end, together with his wife, he founded a Buddhist Society in London. From that moment until his death on 13 April 1983, nearly 60 years later, he never wavered for a moment from that dedication. At the age of 82, he was still the active president of the Buddhist Society; he had just completed a new article for its journal The Middle Way; he had redrafted his history of Buddhism in Britain; a new radio programme was recorded ready for broadcasting; and he had just written a new poem. We could always count on an immediate smile, a pithy comment and a helping hand from our ever young-in-heart president. After a long life spent in untiringly and unstintedly giving himself for the good of others, he was still steadily ‘walking on’ towards the goal of Enlightenment for all beings. When he died, he was looking forward to continuing his endeavours in whatever next life he might be useful.

Born on 15 February 1901 into a family famous for its associations with law, he was christened Travers Christmas, names which had been traditional in the Humphreys family for nearly two centuries. Nevertheless, during his happy childhood he was dubbed ‘Toby’, and remained Toby Humphreys to his family and multitudinous friends for the rest of his life. The family’s motto ‘Be always just’ gave him food for thought which in later life led to an easy acceptance of the law of Karma.

He grew up with a natural, joyous Christian faith until the sudden wartime death of his much-loved elder brother. This shocked him into the understanding that no dogmatic form of religion could ever be sufficiently all-embracing to satisfy his needs. At the age of 17, after much self-inquiry and reflection, he recognized that the Buddha offered a Way for himself and for many others like him.

His horizons widened when he went up to Cambridge University to read law. He found new and stimulating friends, but, above all, he discovered Theosophy, the love of the divine knowledge to be found at the heart of all religions. To his delight, he learned that the founders of the Theosophical Society had been Buddhist. Both had taken Pansil; Mme Blavatsky had studied under Tibetan teachers and Colonel Olcott had
done valuable work for Buddhism in Ceylon. With his innate wholeheartedness, the young Christmas Humphreys, already in love with the mystery of the totality of all-in-one and one-in-all, formed a determination to follow a practical Buddhist way which might perhaps help his dogmatically minded English fellow-countrymen to open their minds and hearts to the Buddha. He knew that the ordinary Englishman of that time did not want robes and ritual but rather a practical and ethical basis for his everyday life and help in learning to see reality more clearly.

Founding the Buddhist Society

Early in 1924 Christmas Humphreys was called to the Bar. This was the commencement of a distinguished career as fine as that of his famous father. He was later to rise to be Senior Prosecuting Counsel, then a Q.C. and finally judge at the Old Bailey. All the time, he was naturally putting his Buddhist principles into practice and becoming known as ‘the gentle judge’. On 19 November, 1924, together with Miss Aileen Faulkner (his future wife), he founded The Buddhist Lodge. This later became The Buddhist Society, London, and was to be the pioneer framework for building up the Buddhist movement in Britain.

The new founding president had a dynamic personality and a capacity for leadership, a power of vision with an intuitive sense of right action and timing and, above all, an impressive ability to teach. All this made it possible for a new transmission of the Dharma to take place in the West. Not only did the Dharma flow directly through him but, by being president of the Society, he acted as a catalyst in transforming the climate of English opinion towards acceptance of the seemingly strange new modes of thought flowing from Ceylon, Thailand, Burma and later from Japan and Tibet. After all, this was no freakish youngster. This was a highly cultured English gentleman whose intelligence and judgement could only be regarded with deep respect.

From very small beginnings the newly formed Society took shape. Since the last third of the nineteenth century there had been a flow of English translations of Buddhist scriptures, almost all Theravada, but these were mainly a basis for academic study. Now here were laymen, led by a teacher with a diamond mind, demanding to know ‘How can we apply these teachings to our ordinary lives?’ There were no precedents for such an adaptation to Western life. When the president married, he wrote a wedding ceremony for himself and future Western Buddhists to use. It soon became necessary to compose a funeral service which could also be performed by lay people, and this was still in use for his own cremation nearly 60 years later. There was no English Sangha, but English Buddhism was laying its own foundations. While ready and waiting to welcome visiting teachers, such as the Anagarika
Dharmapala from Ceylon, the platform was deliberately kept open for all schools of the Buddha-Dharma.

For many years, Christmas Humphreys and his beloved wife, always known as ‘Puck’, ran a hospitable and friendly house. This was far larger than necessary for a young couple, so that there should be space in their home for a Buddhist meeting room, a shrine and a library. It was not until 1943 that this devoted pair, who would be inseparable companions until her death more than thirty years later, had nurtured the young Society into sufficient maturity to necessitate its own larger premises. During these years, knowledge of Theravada grew apace.

Christmas Humphreys was an inspired speaker, and by now he had written four books on Buddhism, three on law and two books of poems. So much vitality, joy and love flowed through his whole being that frequently it could only find expression in poetry. He had many and varied interests – from music to kendo, ballet to herbalism, Jungian thought to the Shakespearean Authorship Society – but equally he had a calm, deep, meditative side to his nature. Also he was unfailingly generous with money, goods, help and encouragement; always he watched for ways in which he could aid anyone. ‘Can I help you?’ was one of his favourite phrases.

With such a man as this, is it surprising that the greatest formative experience during this period was the visit to London of Dr Daisetsu Suzuki in connection with the 1936 meeting of the World Congress of Faiths. To have an inner contact with Dr Suzuki, to see Zen in action, to have a wider glimpse of the glorious realm of Mahayana of which the Zen School is part – all this deepened the understanding of Christmas Humphreys and gave him an extra sparkle. The immediacy of Zen spoke directly to the heart of the man and filled his need.

The Spread of the Dharma Continued in Blitz-torn London

Conditions were extremely difficult, but nevertheless the Society grew. Instead of a group on Mondays only, there was a demand for several meetings a week. Some were open for publicly making known all schools of Buddhism, and others were for members who wished to meditate or to study more deeply the tenets of a particular school. Gradually a council was formed to run what was now becoming a national organization. Christmas Humphreys continued to lead his own pupils in a now Zen-orientated Monday group, and acted as president, chairman and publisher to the Society as a whole, being able to delegate many of his other duties.

Immediately after the war, Christmas Humphreys had the opportunity to combine his duty as a barrister with his love of Buddhism in a prolonged stay in Japan. This, of course, gave him the opportunity to seek
out Dr Suzuki in Kamakura, and they were delighted to see each other after a gap of 10 years. Christmas Humphreys continued to spend as much time with him as possible, literally sitting at his feet. He prepared and edited a complete edition of Suzuki’s work in English, and was delighted to be appointed agent in Europe for all his writings published there. He accepted as a sacred duty the task of keeping all Suzuki’s English writings in print all the time, and his sincere carrying out of this obligation for the rest of his life has helped thousands of Westerners who would not otherwise have had the good fortune to contact the Buddha-Dharma in this inspired way. Future visits of Dr Suzuki to London were planned and later took place in 1953, 1954 and 1958, forging inseparable bonds with Zen and English Buddhism and laying a firm groundwork for the later flowering of Zen in the West.

Another theme came to the fore while Christmas Humphreys was in Japan and continued to develop throughout his subsequent tour of other Buddhist countries. Since the day of the Buddha the transmission of his teaching had slowly spread during the centuries, and each country had come to specialize in certain aspects of the Dharma. As the living teaching was carried north, south and east, it developed; and being a way of life as well as a religion, it naturally became closely interlinked with the language and customs of each nation. It spread slowly and steadily; it had time to mature as it became fully integrated in each host country. And, after 25 centuries, Buddhism had come West in the age of speed and instantaneous communication, creating new and interesting problems.

In the space of one lifetime, the living teachings of all schools had reached the English-speaking world. This provided an almost overwhelming mixture of teachings and scriptures, inextricably mingled with the specialist applications of Northern, Southern and Eastern schools. This wisdom came West dressed in richly woven exotic robes. The first of the many books written by Christmas Humphreys was entitled *What Is Buddhism?*, and one of his lifelong endeavours was to extract the essence of the Buddha’s teaching in order that the West might weave its own national costume and learn to live the Way in its own everyday experience. To this end, after much meditation, he compiled ‘ Twelve Principles of Buddhism’ which all schools could accept as basic. On this foundation English practice could develop.

Another problem raised by the age of instantaneous communication is that of sudden mass confrontation of these widespread schools holding specialist tenets. Christmas Humphreys felt it essential for all Buddhists to find out where they agreed rather than where they differed and to proclaim the Dharma which they held in common. His ‘ Twelve Principles’ helped to avoid sectarianism and to soften the cultural shock
as Buddhist monks and laymen came face to face for the first time. Dr G P Malalasekera was another great figure of our time who saw this danger; and when he founded the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Christmas Humphreys was happy to become a vice-president. Through the work of such men, Buddhism became consolidated throughout the world.

On his return to England, Christmas Humphreys continued working with the ever-growing Buddhist Society and celebrated his fiftieth birthday with the publication of *Buddhism* in a Penguin paperback. This book has done more than any other to propagate the Dharma in Britain, and perhaps in the whole Western world. It became the standard textbook, is available everywhere and has already sold more than a million copies. Here was the turning point: from being a minor fringe interest, Buddhism became a talked-of subject. Streams of people came for more information; and groups formed in several English towns, wishing to be affiliated to the main Society.

Now the seedling Dharma was well established and had to be brought to maturity. Lecturing, writing, radio, television, teaching in the Society, and correspondence were all dealt with. He always carried what he jokingly referred to as his NTBD list (short for the next-things-to-be-done); and in spare moments between all this and his demanding legal career, his buoyant heart still overflowed into poetry. His ever-ready (often impish) wit and twinkling eye endeared him to all.

After the 1959 invasion of Tibet came contact with the Tibetans; and at the request of the Dalai Lama, he visited and reported on all the exile camps in India. He then assisted His Holiness in creating a Council of Tibet to coordinate work for the Tibetans in exile and the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism.

These were busy years, and gradually Buddhism became completely accepted in England. Buddhist lay groups were forming and reforming in various
towns, for the first time independently of the efforts of the Buddhist Society in London. Monks from various schools were being invited to teach, Ceylon and Thailand were enlarging their missions and the Dharma thrived.

**Christmas Humphreys as a Teacher**

Naturally Christmas Humphreys taught on many different levels, and he used a different persona for each, although always the same heart shone through.

For public lectures, radio and television, he liked best to use the themes of Karma and rebirth. He taught rebirth in the manner of one who knows. The weight of weariness would lift from an audience as Toby declared, ‘There is no death!’ If hope about future lives crept in, Toby was not satisfied – he regarded hope as a flabby, wishy-washy thing. He aimed at raising confidence in the meaningfulness of this present life. What we do now MATTERS. We are suffering the results of our past actions, but we are now free to accept those results in whatever manner we choose and by this form our own future.

Much of his teaching was done through books. Remember that more than a million people bought just one of them. Granted, some copies of *Buddhism* sit unread upon shelves, but others are in libraries and read by many. And certainly a great deal of hard work has been done by many thousands who bought *Teach Yourself Zen* in the E.U.P. *Teach Yourself* series. Needless to say, he received many letters, and it was part of his personal discipline to see that he answered every single one on the day it was received. Even if he returned home tired at 11 at night, he would say cheerfully, ‘Well, what was in the post today?’ and sit straight down to deal with the pile. All letters were answered with wisdom and compassion and in such a way that each recipient knew that he had at least one friend somewhere in the world. These letters were very varied, but I think the people most helped in this way were those who had had some form of mystical experience and felt isolated as a result. They would read a book by Toby, or perhaps see him on television, and feel that at last, here is someone who would understand. And, indeed, he did understand. He was often able to help them earth the experience and apply it in everyday living. Then he would help them with the next step on the path.

He lived his own teaching in his daily life at the Old Bailey. Someone in the dock would be reminded that no person was sending him to prison – no judge, no jury. ‘Only your own actions have put you where you are. You knew that what you were doing would bring you here.’

A young man who had already been in prison or borstal four times
pleaded guilty, and was amazed because this judge offered no censure or scathing comment but questioned him with careful and considerate calm before deciding what was best to do. He felt that for the first time he had been spoken to as a human being.

Another young man convicted of arson wrote to me: ‘I saw in the paper that Mr Humphreys has died. I am so sorry. He helped me very much. It was good to know that there was such a man in the world.’

The key to all this was given by Toby himself. When asked how he, as a Buddhist, could be a judge and how he felt about it, Toby answered quite simply, ‘I am the man in the dock.’

When speaking to Buddhist groups in general, his teaching became more dynamic, almost fierce. First, always, a good pounding on MOTIVE. What are you doing? Why have you come? What are you hoping to get out of it? Then perhaps there followed a deeper look at Karma as readjustment of the total Harmony. Always there was an attack on the greedy ego. ‘I want. I want.’ – he called it the constant yapping of the dog of self.

‘Get rid of the ego – Did somebody hurt your feelings? You must have left a large lump of ego lying around for someone to walk on. Only a self-centred ego has feelings that can be hurt!’

‘Have you a moral problem in your life? Look at the whole picture carefully and the needs of everyone concerned, including yours. Then look for ‘What I want’ and neatly take it out with a pair of tweezers. You’ll see the right thing to do.’ And one of his favourite sayings was: ‘Walk On!’

His own Zen group met on Monday evenings. ‘Toby Zen’ we used to call it because it was outwardly very different from the formal Zen practised in Japan. You might call it bus-stop Buddhism. How to use every minute of every day. During one day, a pupil of his carried a stopwatch and clocked up two hours spent in odd minutes – getting dressed, walking to work, on the bus, waiting for telephones, washing up etc. This meant, according to Toby, that every one of us had at least two hours a day completely free in which to work on our current theme!

Every action and reaction in the day could be looked at. Did the milkman forget to leave the milk this morning? ‘Well, what was your reaction?’ This was the basic hard grind, and through it shone his spiritual teaching, leading always towards Totality and the Complete Interdiffusion of all Particulars.

Oh, those Monday evenings! When we came out afterwards it seemed as though the very air had been washed cleaner. And once a term we all spent a whole weekend working and meditating together. He set a theme for us to work on each term. This should be meditated on for a short time daily and applied practically during the whole of
every day. Indeed, one ended up dreaming of it at night!

Let me give you a few examples of such themes:

‘It’s All RIGHT.’ Can one learn to meet every single thing every day with this complete acceptance?

‘Not Two.’ Can one see everything going on as pairs of opposites, and then truly say ‘Not Two’?

‘It doesn’t matter.’ If it doesn’t matter, must one really get worked up about all those petty trifles that upset us? And is there something behind that does matter?

‘I’m in the way.’ In the way of what?

This constant questioning of everything one is and does imbued one’s whole being.

Personal interviews, or sanzen, were the heart of the training. If you bear in mind that Toby was for most of his working life Senior Prosecuting Counsel for the Crown and then a judge at the Old Bailey, can you imagine what his cross-examination of one’s spiritual state was like? Sometimes it was just one sword flash that would strike you bare to the marrow or sometimes it was a gruelling cross-examination down to the roots, but the end result was always another chunk of selfish ego flayed alive. Then probably followed some loving throw-away sentence from him which, when meditated on, would put everything into a new perspective.

But in the long run, it wasn’t what he taught but what he was that mattered. What was he? I can’t tell you. What can one say about a far more highly evolved being than oneself?

I suppose most people meeting Christmas Humphreys would have noticed nothing special. He was obviously a fine character, delightful company, a wit, cosmopolitan. He had style and elegance, beautiful manners and movements. His great emotional relaxation was in music and ballet and he adored giving parties — dinner parties, tea parties, garden parties. He was brilliant in his career and typical of the finest kind of English gentleman.

But how many saw deeper than that? I was sometimes reminded of that sentence in The Voice of the Silence: ‘Self-doomed to live through future Kalpas, unthanked and unperceived by other men; wedged as a stone with countless other stones which form the Guardian Wall.’

When one looked closer, one noticed that he never bore a grudge, even for a moment. He always preferred to dwell on the good in people. Even someone he had known for years was never taken for granted: meeting them again was always fresh. Behind all the panache — at over
The 64th annual Summer School, consisting of one residential week, will expound all the major aspects of the Buddha’s teachings and their practice.

The organic relatedness of all the teachings will be explored, with special emphasis on their practice and application in our time. It presents a unique opportunity to get the authentic flavour of the Buddha’s ancient path and guidance in how to walk it.

There will be periods of meditation, practice talks by Martin Goodson and Venerable Myokun and free time in the afternoons to explore the Cotswold countryside. There will be evening talks by Charles Allen, Roberta Mansell, Venerable Sogen Ven. Phrakru Samulom, Udayan Chakrabarti, Alan Sidi.

The Buddhist Society, the Hokun Trust and the Trevor Leggett Adhyatma Yoga Trust offer a number of reduced rates for newcomers, those unable to meet the full cost, and young persons’ discounts.

For more information please visit the webpage www.thebuddhistsociety.org/page/courses

Or contact The Buddhist Society 020 7834 5858
70 he had been known to call a waiter by spinning his hat to the ceiling and clapping his hands twice smartly before catching it – he was a very humble man, and one sensed the motif of ‘I am the servant of mankind.’ And then there was always the sparkle: ‘Guess what thought I woke up with this morning – There’s Only Everything!’

Such little things one remembers. A group of us all ordering wine with a meal. One lad asks for Coca-Cola and another laughs at him. Quick as a flash: ‘Coca-Cola sounds a good idea,’ says Toby, and drinks it with every appearance of enjoyment. Only I happen to know he hates it – but what does a nasty taste matter if it is helpful to someone at the moment?

Another time I was out with Toby at the end of October. We met some ragamuffins chanting ‘Penny for the Guy.’ Toby gave them each a very large tip, and I laughed at him, saying ‘Toby, not so much! Its nowhere near the fifth of November yet.’ But he looked at me gravely and said, ‘Would you have me put nothing into grubby little hands held out begging?’ What could I say? Were we not, all of us, all the time, holding out metaphorically grubby hands to him?

He was such a joyous person – always ‘What Fun!’ He regarded the whole world of Maya as a delightful game to play in, the only rule being ‘You mustn’t get stuck.’ And he was always loving, always helping others to raise their consciousness towards the experience of totality, always singing through his poems.

**Recognition of his Life’s Work in 1977**

Christmas Humphreys, as Founding President of the oldest and largest Buddhist organization in Great Britain, was invited to be present at the Thanksgiving Service in St Paul’s Cathedral in commemoration of the Queen’s Silver Jubilee. This royal mark of recognition showed Buddhism to be fully accepted as one of the resident religions of England.

By the year of his death, there were in Great Britain about a hundred Buddhist organizations. They ranged from monasteries with several acres of ground to University groups and societies with their own premises to those with a dozen or so members who met in private houses, in the same way that the Buddhist Society itself had started. The Buddha Dharma had come to the British Isles to stay!

How is it possible for us to express our gratitude to a man of such noble gifts? We can only marvel that one person was able to do so much to help so many. No one whom his presence touched remained unchanged. Indeed, the warm radiance of his life’s work still ripples throughout Western civilization wherever a place is found for the Buddha’s word to be spoken.

Thank you, Christmas Humphreys.
Recalling TCH, the Society and Summer Schools Past

Bodhicarini Upasika Jayasili (Jacquetta Gomes) remembers speakers at the Buddhist Society’s Summer Schools.

The Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) is fortunate to have had as its spiritual advisors Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya (24 August 1896 – 18 July 1998) and Venerable Henepola Gunaratana, who visited The Buddhist Society Summer Schools in 1989 and 1993.

My first meeting with Venerable Amaro (now Ajahn, abbot of Amaravati monastery), was at the Buddhist Society Summer School in 1982. The November 1982 issue of The Middle Way showed photographs of Venerable Amaro being presented with a birthday cake; and going on pindapata (alms round) with Venerable (now Ajahn) Sumedho and the late Sister (later Ayya) Rocana.

Sister Rocana was the oldest and the first of the nuns and ayyas in the Forest Sangha in the West. One afternoon Venerable Sumedho gave a talk and left, leaving the young Venerable Amaro and the older Sister Rocana to answer questions. Someone asked a question. Venerable Amaro endeavoured to give an answer, but it was a question that required a great deal of practical experience of life. Sensing his difficulty, Sister Rocana asked ‘May I speak?’ and Venerable Amaro replied, ‘Say anything you want to.’ Sister Rocana used her much longer experience of life to answer this and other questions. The decision to include Sister Rocana demonstrated to all present that the young Venerable Amaro had common sense, maturity and the makings of a very good future teacher.

The 87-year-old Venerable Ananda Maitreya and...
Anagarika Munindra were guest speakers at the Summer School. Despite his great age, Venerable Ananda Maitreya stood to give a talk on ‘The Three-Factored Path’. This talk appeared in the February 1983 issue of The Middle Way.

When I attended the 1982 Summer School, I already knew Venerable Ananda Maitreya from the London Buddhist Vihara. At the Summer School, I went to his room to take something he needed, and waited outside the open door while he was talking to Venerable Sumedho and Venerable Amaro on the subject of the monastic life. From where I was standing, I could overhear the conversation; and it was interesting to hear Venerable Amaro asking the elderly Venerable Ananda Maitreya questions based on the latter’s decades-long experience of being a bhikkhu, a Buddhist elder and leader. Venerable Ananda Maitreya eventually asked me to come in and present the required item.

Venerable Ananda Maitreya was ordained as a novice on 2 March 1911 in Sri Lanka. His upasampada (higher ordination) was conducted on 14 July 1916. He was mahanayaka (Head) of the Amarapura Nikaya of the Sangha in Sri Lanka and had been a participant at the historic sixth Sangayama (Buddhist Council), held in Burma in 1954–6. That Council was held to coincide with Buddha Jayanthi, the 2500th anniversary of the passing away of the Buddha. Members of the Sangha from the five Theravada Buddhist countries of South-East Asia (Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia) attended this Council. The purpose of these councils is to rehearse (Sangayama means Rehearsal) and compare their respective copies of the Tipitaka (Pali Canon), the teachings of the Buddha, in order to ensure that purity and accuracy has been maintained over the years. The previous five Councils had all been held under royal patronage in India and Sri Lanka. An important council was convened in the third century BCE by Emperor Asoka of India after his conversion to Buddhism when he found that wrong teachings were being taught and practised by the Sangha. That Council saw the expulsion of many unsuitable monks.

The Burmese government wished the Sixth Council to produce an authorized version of the Tipitaka. Venerable Ananda Maitreya was the Sri Lankan representative on the final editing committee. He had also
served as chairman of the Council for a few weeks during its third session in 1956. The Burmese government subsequently conferred upon him the honorific title of Agga Mahapandita (Chief Great Scholar). After his one hundredth birthday, he was invited to Burma, where he received their highest religious title, Abhidhaja Maharatthagura (His Eminence, the Great Spiritual Teacher of the Nation).

RECALLING THE SOCIETY AND THE EARLY SUMMER SCHOOLS

Hazel Waghorn has been a member of the Buddhist Society for 40 years. Here are some of her early memories, from the 1970s and 1980s.

I joined the Buddhist Society after attending the Introductory Course given by Douglas Barrow-Burt of the Dharma Research and Training Group, and attended my first meditation session which was under the guidance of Burt Taylor. Each sitting period seemed to last for hours! Garry Thomson took over the class from Burt and ran it for many years.

Later I attended the Zen class alternately run by Basil Sladen and ‘Brett’ (Arnold Brettell) with Alan Dipper. This class had a pleasant, friendly atmosphere, and so I didn’t mind not being ‘promoted’ to Christmas Humphreys’ own Zen class. In any case, there were plenty of opportunities to hear him, as he gave regular talks and was an eloquent speaker.

When I joined the Society, it was celebrating its fiftieth birthday, and I
heard Irmgard Schloegl, later to become Venerable Myokyo-ni, speak for the first time. As she was the librarian of the Society in those days, I got to know her better when I was occasionally able to help out in the reception. One day, she recommended *The Ox and His Herdsman* by Master D R Otsu; and when I later admitted shamefacedly that I hadn’t understood the text, she gently replied that she didn’t expect me to, but actually wanted me to see the illustrations that she loved so much. Since then, I too have become very fond of them.

There was one particular Buddha Day celebration at Caxton Hall to which Mr Humphreys invited three or four well-known Theravada bhikkhus. The only one I remember was Ajahn Chah. I don’t think he spoke but I’m glad that I saw him, having heard so much about him since then. I was also present at Caxton Hall in 1983 for Christmas Humphreys’ very well attended memorial service. At the Buddhist Society’s Summer School that year, a different kind of memorial to him was given: this was a wonderful display of flower arrangements by the members of Stella Coe’s ikebana class.

When I first attended the Buddhist Society’s Summer School at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire in 1977, there were daily teachings in Theravada, Zen and Tibetan which sometimes overran. On one occasion, Christmas Humphreys, whose class followed ours, was waiting outside with a face like thunder as we trooped sheepishly past.

It was also in 1977 that I first encountered Ajahn Sumedho. With his combination of wisdom and humour, he was to become a regular and popular speaker at both the Summer School and the Society in Eccleston Square, often accompanied by other bhikkhus who also gave talks. I have a special memory of the peaceful atmosphere in the chapel when Ajahn Sumedho and other Chithurst monks and nuns came to High Leigh for a night sitting one year. It was much less peaceful during the daily Tibetan pujas with the cymbals and bells and deep-voiced chanting which I rather enjoyed although I couldn’t pitch my voice low enough to join in. In the end, however, I preferred zazen.
Remembering High Leigh
SUMMER SCHOOLS

Pictures by Joan Peaty
Maggie Cowan presenting a gift to Soko Morinaga Roshi at the end of the Summer School.
Piṇḍapāta

Sister Rocana, Murial Pugh and Catherine Hewitt
In 1979, Ronald Eyre came for the week and spoke about making The Long Search TV series, which I’d previously enjoyed watching. He had been impressed by the Sri Lankan teacher Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya, who visited High Leigh in 1982. He was 88 years old at the time but gave a talk in almost perfect English. He said he’d been aware that his previous talk had overrun by 10 minutes, which he’d felt was discourteous, and therefore spoke for only 35 minutes. However, when somebody asked him about Metta, he spoke unhesitatingly for a further 10 minutes.

Like many people, I looked forward especially to the talks by Soko Morinaga Roshi and Trevor Leggett. I remember Trevor Leggett striding across the lawn during the day to practise his golf swing while the Roshi took walks around the High Leigh grounds. At the start of his talk one year, he requested that some barbed wire be removed from a particular tree, which was soon done.

The last Summer School to be held at High Leigh was in 1987. A new era began when it was transferred to the Royal Agricultural College the following year.

Bruno Portigliatti, a former president and now Honorary President of EBU and Director of the Buddhist Information Center of Giaveno (Italy), sends a tribute and his memories.

I first got in touch with the Buddhist Society in September 1983, coming to London on the occasion of the Eighth Plenary Assembly of the European Buddhist Union, previously arranged by Christmas Humphreys, who unfortunately was not able to participate in that event, as he had abandoned the body on 13 April of that year. In spite of that sad absence, the Assembly went ahead regularly, and the delegates were assisted by Mrs Muriel Conze, Mrs Anne Bancroft and Miss Paula
Chitty. Thereafter the delegation visited the headquarters of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and the Buddhadipa Temple, where they were greeted by Ven. P. M. Somboon Siddhiyano, at that time the chaplain of European Buddhist Union.

During the deliberations of the Assembly, Arthur Burton-Stibbon was appointed as President of EBU, and at the same time I became Vice-President. It was for me a profound emotion to have the opportunity to visit the historical seat of the oldest Buddhist association in Europe, established in 1924, which is now about to celebrate 90 years of that noble activity.

In December 1997, I was back again to London in order to visit my dear friend Arthur, being his guest in his own house near Eccleston Square. That meeting was doomed to be our last one, as Arthur Burton-Stibbon, with whom I had shared so many years of harmonious work and who at the end of his second mandated presidency had wanted me to be in charge of the EBU as its new President, would have to leave the body in April 1998.

These few words are intended to recall and to commemorate the noble endeavour of a dear friend and also the path travelled by the Buddhist Society.

Alan Levy remembers Christmas Humphreys, Founder of The Buddhist Society.

When I first came to the Buddhist Society in the early 1970s as a 20-year-old, I used to pass Christmas Humphreys on the stairs and he would say ‘good evening’ and I would shyly look up at this tall, straight man in a suit that contrasted with my hippie garb.

At the time I attended a Zen class upstairs taken by Basil Sladen (below) who I considered a great Zen teacher, who died on the way to The Buddhist Society in 1983. Christmas Humphreys died shortly afterwards.

I also attended a small class in the Library that concentrated on a book or a sutra with Christmas Humphreys. He always tried to get us to understand and discuss at a high, non-intellectual level. He would say, ‘one can use intellect to get to a non-intellectual understanding’. He liked the concept of the higher mind, maybe Zen No-mind, it was, he said, like climbing a high mountain, and when reached, seeing clearly beyond any concept. He also was fond of quoting the Heart Sutra: ‘form is emptiness and emptiness is form’ . . . and the sutra ends . . . ‘Gone, gone, gone beyond, Gone Altogether Beyond, Enlightenment Fulfilled. O What an
Awakening!

One day I entered the Library and sitting at the writing desk was Christmas Humphreys who looked up at me and asked what kind of Buddhism I followed. I could have answered ‘Zen’ at that time, but to my surprise and being clever or more wise then than I am now, I answered ‘None!’ He said ‘Good Man’, and carried on writing.

He would also say, ‘How dare you hate another human being’ (not to me personally). As a Judge he would say that the man in the dock was also him. I suppose he meant that it was Karma that brought them together or, if he made the wrong judgement, he would have the Karma from that. Also, which was a bit hard to take, he would say, ‘All that happens, happens right’. And he would talk about cause and affect (karma): ‘If a wasp is at the window try and let it out, as it only wants to get back to its nest and not be killed.’

I think that he was also sad, at some level, from losing his wife Aileen (Puck) even before she died, as she was in hospital for such a long time. It was she who designed the Buddhist Society logo which is still used today on all the Society’s literature, publications, website etc. The original is in the Library. I would like to see this made in stained glass. I was told that Christmas Humphreys was with friends when he died and that he had remained active until shortly before his death. I saw him only days or the day before, standing tall, like a pillar holding up the Buddhist Society and giving talks and classes aged 82 in 1983.

Christmas Humphreys was profoundly affected when he lost his elder brother in the First World War, and one day he shouted out in the street ‘What’s it all about?’ Later, he said he found the answer in Buddhism.

He gave me a scarf one winter which I still have. In my mind at the time I took it not only as a gift for the cold, but as Tibetans give scarfs (katas). ‘Whenever something had been done, even a good deed, he would say, ‘Walk On! And don’t wobble’. He liked the Bodhisattva ideal of helping others, often using the words of the shop assistant ‘Can I help you?’ Being willing to help others, (or was that television programme more important at the time, than helping someone?)

Christmas Humphreys said that when he first met his wife-to-be, he knew that he had known her in a previous life and said to her ‘It’s you, again’. He was kind enough to give me a reference for a job as a carer. I stayed in that job for many years, eighteen altogether (unlike other jobs that didn’t last long).

I also have a signed copy of Christmas Humphreys’ autobiography Both Sides of the Circle; it says ‘To Alan with all good Dharma, Christmas Humphreys 21/6/82’. The book has some amazing pictures of him with monks in Japan etc. I am very proud of this book. He also gave a BBC
radio interview in the 1980s. I have recently given a couple of photographs to the Buddhist Society that I took of him, inside and outside the Lecture Hall which I had shown him at the time.

He used to tell us to think of the Buddha image in the Library several times during every day whatever we were doing. I could not remember to do this; shame on me.

When he first opened The Buddhist Society, Christmas Humphreys would spend many, many nights waiting for people to come, and for many, many nights nobody did come. But he persevered and more and more people did come eventually.

Once at a meeting, I remember (often) that someone said to Christmas Humphreys that they were thinking of giving up Christianity to be a Buddhist but he answered that ‘You don’t have to give up Christianity to become a Buddhist’. He would also mention how one can get angry while having trouble just opening a packet, instead of opening it calmly.

When the Buddhist Society was going through a financial crisis he was still very reluctant to charge more for membership, classes and courses. And it has ever maintained a low price just as its spirit, or whatever you want to call it, has also been maintained.

I always bow to his picture, the one that is facing the picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the hall of the Society. It’s nice that there is a picture of Christmas Humphreys opposite His Holiness. I know His Holiness has a high regard for Christmas Humphreys and seeing his picture it is as if he still has an eye on me. Long live the memory of Christmas Humphreys and The Buddhist Society . . . they are one! And as Christmas Humphreys would also say, ‘Not one, not two, gone, gone, gone beyond, O What an Awakening.’

I believe Christmas Humphreys also liked Carl Jung, who when asked, ‘Do you believe in God!’ said, ‘to know is better than to believe’. I am still here remembering that there was a song called ‘Cleaning Windows’ written and sung by Van Morrison that says, ‘I’m going home to read my Book of Zen by Christmas Humphreys’. If ever I was fortunate enough to meet Van Morrison I would ask him if he had ever met Christmas Humphreys. Maybe he did but privately, as he is a well known singer/song writer even these days.

I feel from the many Founders Days that very little is said about Christmas Humphreys; also it is not strongly emphasized how important he was in starting and establishing Buddhism in the West and maintaining The Buddhist Society. He made The Buddhist Society beautiful with all the things that he brought to it as many already know. It would be good if a recording of Christmas Humphreys could be played on Founders Day so that everyone could hear him speak.

That’s it – Time to Walk On!
In a Zen Monastery

Muriel Daw

With much gratitude to the Venerable Roshi Soen Nakagawa, Abbot of Ryutakuji, and Toby, otherwise known as Christmas Humphreys, founder of the London Buddhist Society and the leader of its Zen group until his death in 1983

When I was in a Japanese Zen monastery working under Soen Roshi, he paid me only one compliment all the time I was there. He said approvingly, ‘You the only Westerner I know who doesn’t want to talk about Zen.’ In the light of that, you may well wonder what I am doing now. Many books have been written and many lectures given about Zen. But is there any Zen in them? For me, Zen is not something to talk about and discuss. There is no such thing as abstract truth; there is only reality. As Keats said, philosophy will clip an angel’s wings. Bodhidharma, the founder of the Zen school, described Zen as:

A special transmission outside the Scriptures;
No dependence on words or letters;
Direct pointing at the Mind of man;
Seeing into one’s own Nature; and the attainment of Buddhahood.

The nature of Zen is the true nature of each thing or person. The Zen of snail-ness was caught by the poet Issa when he said,

O snail,
Climb Mount Fuji,
But slowly, slowly!

I have seen my roshi stand in front of a wild lily, and bow before it, then pick it for a vase in the temple. The very picking was a natural ceremony. That was Zen, but my telling you about it is not, so that is no good.

It is all very well saying that the universe is one interdependent whole and that each separate one of us is that whole. This is a perfectly sound statement of the way things really are, but unless each one of us really knows it for himself – so what? And this experience can be found only inside ourselves. Buddha means awakened, and it is only we who can awaken. It is said, ‘When you awaken, it is your own mind that is awakened. If you look for a tangible Buddha somewhere outside, you are foolish. It is like a man looking for a fish: he must first look in the water because that is where you find fish.’

I cannot write about Zen, but I can tell you what it feels like to be in a Zen monastery and to be in the presence of a roshi who lives totally and universally while manifesting his true self in each moment as he experi-
ences it. Perhaps you may be able to get a trace of the fragrance of Zen.

Zen in Japanese, *Dhyāna* in Sanskrit and *Ch’an* in Chinese, all translate as meditation, which means to be still and focus the mind; inner vision. So, the Zen School is the Meditation School, and we can talk about that quite easily. But Zen itself is the realization of what is experienced during that meditation, and this cannot be talked about. It has something to do with that state of mind in which we are not separate from other things, are indeed identical with them, yet retain our own individuality and personal peculiarities.

I once heard a roshi give an ‘as-if’ explanation of Rinzai Zen methods. He said that when one becomes completely discontented with being in the suffering world of Samsara and doing things that seem worthless – what we might call ‘the divine discontent’ – it feels as though the whole structure of relativity surrounds one; and there arises a longing to break completely out of the whole thing and see reality for ourselves.

The structure surrounds and traps us as though we were living in a prison. It is like being in a greenhouse made of frosted glass, and in meditation we attack it. Some people start breathing and rubbing at the frosting until they can see through a large patch, but it is dim and smeared. Others start scratching away with a fingernail until they get a bright peep-hole; but although sharply clear, it is very tiny. We must try to shatter the whole thing and find that ‘Nothing exists except pure radiant mind.’

It is a school in which the immediate eagerness for ‘Enlightenment here and now’ directly permeates all everyday actions. It cuts through emotions, intellect, and all swollen-headed perceptions of ourselves. We have only to remove our own shadow, which is much harder than it sounds, in order to experience the light that is ever-existent. It is a way full of hard work, joy, beauty and the laughter of true freedom.

Of course, simply being in the presence of an enlightened roshi is a spiritual training in itself. There are no habit-formations, so every one of his actions is new, fresh, creative.

The pupil has to leap up to the master’s level of insight to experience it, because if the teacher brings his level down to words and talking, well, we might just as well read a book.

A Zen master will resort to any means he can think of to make us realize the truth of all pairs of opposites.

He sternly demands: see this stick – it has two ends – Now, what else could you call the ends? Give them another name!

Two ends of a stick indeed! There is no such thing. It is not cut into two ends and if it were, how many ends would there be? It is one stick, one wholeness, one stick-ness, and to name it as anything at all is miles away from the real-ness of it. Talking about a stick bears no relationship
at all to the thing in itself. He is just tricking us into low-level relative argument; and we are silly if we let ourselves be tricked. Still, we learn by it. One day, if he asks such a silly question about names for two ends of a stick, someone will show him the function of a stick and threaten to beat him with it.

Zen is the direct way – straight up the mountain-side. If you like to take the path that spirals round the mountain, that’s fine. It eventually leads to the same place. But that means following another school.

The Buddha’s Birthday

The eighth of April is celebrated as the Buddha’s birthday in Japan. On the eighth of April, 1963 in England, [I was 40 at the time], a harassed airport official telephoned the Buddhist Society and said, ‘We have a VIP stranded overnight, and he is a Zen Buddhist abbot. What should we do with him?’ Toby said promptly, ‘Put him in a car and send him here. We’ll look after him.’

That evening, the Zen class at the Buddhist Society had Soen Roshi as an honoured guest. We were delighted, not only was he a roshi, a teacher of exceptional standing, but he also had a fair amount of English.

At that time Soen Nakagawa, Abbot of Ryutakuji Monastery, was the only Japanese roshi who could speak English, and he had landed in London – by accident?

Towards the end of the evening he addressed one personal sentence to me about the Heart Sutra, a short Buddhist scripture. The heavens shattered, creation dissolved about me, the solid wholeness of the universe seemed to be present in a lightning flash. I was totally confused. Quite helpless, I muttered some inadequate response, and for the next few days was conscious of nothing else. I was blind and deaf to all other matters.

Preparation

It took me two years to get to Japan, but I knew I HAD to work under this man who could play with universal awareness as though it were a
violin. People said to me patiently, don’t be stupid. He’s the abbot of a monastery. Monasteries don’t take women! I took no notice. I learned a few basic words of Japanese.

I practised a lot of zazen sitting. I never could sit in the lotus position, but I managed. I re-arranged things at work in order to take several months’ leave. I continued to work hard in the Zen class, and recited the Heart Sutra to myself practically non-stop. And I found out as much as I could about life in a Zen monastery.

There is always a very tough probation before being accepted by a Zen teacher: the would-be pupil has first to prove both determination and ability to stand any amount of hardship. Zen is the direct way and is only for those with intense determination and longing for truth. Imagine someone holding your head down under water until you are choking. Only when your need for Enlightenment is as great as the need for air will you feel the need for Zen monastic training.

**Tradition**

Here is a little about Japanese tradition before I tell you what happened to me. In Japan people do not separate religions as we do, and families belong both to a Shinto shrine and to a Buddhist temple.

Shinto is the ancient religion of Japan, and consists of worship of the *kami*, the spirits, with much purification and dignified ceremony. The *kami* are rather like the Olympian Gods and Heroes, with all their legendary history, celestial grandeur, and robust earthiness. Sometimes a particular tree or rock is a *kami* and has a special sacred rope around it, marking it off from this secular world. Some historical emperors and heroes are *kami* – they have a special numinous quality. Thomas Edison lived a while in Japan, and with his power over electricity he was obviously a genuine *kami*. After he died, a Shinto shrine was built to him, and you can go there at any time to pay your respects to Edison and worship him.

Every Japanese baby is born into Shinto, and in their early days, babies are ceremonially presented at the shrine to which the family is attached. Shinto is a religion that, like Confucianism, has very clear ideals of behaviour to family, ancestors, the state, and, above all, the Emperor.

The growing youngster will perform all his duties to family, school, and then employer, under the auspices of Shinto. Marriage will be celebrated with a Shinto ceremony (and maybe with a Christian one too if he is modern and broadminded, and likes to be thought fashionable). But when midway through life and having presented his own children at the Shinto shrine and watched them become independent, he will usually change to Buddhism and start attending the temple to which his family
is attached. In the afternoon and evening of his life he has different needs, and these must be respected. Eventually he will be buried by Buddhist rites. So within each family, some members follow Shinto and some Buddhism.

Japanese boys tend to be much less individualistic than Westerners, and if one boy turns out to have a vocation for Zen Buddhism among all his Shinto companions this is quite outstanding.

His parents will take him to the local Zen temple (not a monastery); and if his character and sense of religious urgency seem strong enough, he will be accepted as a novice. From that time on, he will live in the local temple, going from there to school, and then to university if he is academically minded. There he would take Buddhist Religious Studies, and probably classical Chinese and Sanskrit.

Living in the temple, he gets up for an hour’s ceremony and meditation before breakfast. He studies the Buddhist scriptures, helps with public ceremonies, cleans the temple, and acts as attendant to his teacher. He learns to perform all physical actions quickly, adeptly and in a Zen spirit.

If he flourishes in this atmosphere and his intent is eager and firm [it needs to be very strong indeed], his master will prepare him for entry into the monastery when the time is ripe. He will also warn him of the coming hardships. A would-be monk has a very tough probation before he is accepted.

One day the young man sets off carrying a very small pack with only bare necessities. When he reaches the monastery, he enters the compound and bows respectfully at the main door. He begs for admission and presents a letter of introduction from his teacher. Back comes the answer: ‘No room, we have as many monks as we can feed,’ or some such reply, and he is refused admission.

The would-be monk does not leave. He puts his pack on the high step, kneels down on the ground with his head on the pack in a supplicating position, and does not move. He stays motionless in this position for several days, and refuses to budge.

Every few hours, three or four burly monks come and punch him, beat him up, and throw him out, slamming the gate. This gives him a
chance to stretch and relieve his aches. Next he sits cross-legged outside until the gate is opened to admit someone else and then he can slip in and resumes his supplicating position at the front door.

Each night, he is grudgingly allowed entry to an outer guest room, where he does not lie down, but sits in lotus position all night. Next morning he is given a bowl of rice and is thrown out again. So it goes on, until he has proved both his determination, and his ability to stand any amount of gruelling hardship for the sake of being allowed to search for truth under the guidance of the roshi, the old Teacher.

Eventually, after five or seven days, if the would-be monk has withstood the test, he is admitted to the guest-room for three days of probation. Only after that can he be admitted to the monastery proper.

One day in the future, he will roar with laughter at the memory of those terrifying monks all punching and beating him. He will learn for himself exactly which muscle to pummel when it aches, how to hit hard enough to give relief to the great trapezoid muscles, and the best way to knuckle the spine into giving a glow of life through-out the body.

A monk does not make a life-long profession, but requests permission to train in the monastery for a certain length of time, probably three years to start with. During this time, his head will be shaved, he will keep the Monastic Precepts, and he will live a celibate life. For these first three years no academic books or scriptures are allowed. Only immediate experience will help him; academic knowledge is useless. At the end of this time he will either return to the world or ask to stay on again for another period. If people come in wishing to stay for life, they will continually renew their commitment. Others may wish to spend only a few years in meditation in order to deepen their insight before coming out again.

Eventually comes the day of the new monk’s first interview with the roshi, and he will ask to be allowed to stay in the monastery for an agreed period.
He is given a meditation practice by his new teacher. It may be counting the breath, counting each out-going breath. ONE, TWO, THREE, up to TEN, and then again 1 to 10, interminably. It is not a matter of focusing on each number, but on so much becoming the number itself that there is nothing but that one number in the whole universe.

Or he may be given his first koan, an unsolvable spiritual riddle, as a meditation theme. For the first stage in Rinzai Zen one of the following three koans for beginners is usually given:

A monk asked Joshu ‘Has the dog a Buddha-nature or not?’
Joshu answered ‘MU’ [‘No’ or ‘No–thingness’].

Listen to the sound of the Single Hand.

Thinking of neither good nor evil; at this very moment what is your original face before your father and mother were born?

Next the new monk will be taken to the Meditation hall, and be shown the place where he will live. It is a strip of rush matting, three feet by six feet. There he will have his mattress, which in the day-time will be rolled up to use as his seat for zazen meditation.

There, in a row with all the other monks, he will spend his first three years. When get-up bell rings at four in the morning, they rise together, chanting while they put on their robes. In file they will use the toilet, and rinse their mouths; and within ten minutes they will be seated in rows in the Great Hall for the early morning ceremony. During the three training years, all meditation and work will be performed together, and be performed with dignity, beauty and harmony.

The rhythm of the day will afford no indecision or hindrance to the importance of the chief task, which is maintaining complete absorption in the koan. Meditation, chanting, communal work, and the begging round – these go on throughout the year. Every fourth week of the meditation term is Sesshin Week, which trained lay-people may also attend with special permission.

The Sesshin Week

Everyone gets-up at 3.30 a.m. and there is only a little communal work. Hour after hour of meditation is given to the koan, in lotus posture. Private interviews are held several times a day with Roshi. These are no gentle spiritual talks; but urgent, intense, sometimes violent, as the monk throws his whole being into breaking the barrier that holds him in the bondage of his own illusion. He is fighting with all his strength to get his head above the water that is drowning him. He knows that his koan is the only way through.

He knows that his own greed, hatred and ignorance are the three
things forming a thick cloud around him, and he needs to get through this cloud. He needs to wake up, to cease looking at the universe through his own personality of ‘what I like’ and ‘what I don’t like,’ which can only distort his view. His first insight into what things are really like is called kensho, and once this is experienced, he has real incentive to continue with the training.

The sesshin is a week of physical agony and spiritual tension. At the end of each day, the monks file, exhausted, back to the Zendo taking off their robes while chanting. They lie down, each straight on his mattress, lying on his right side, head resting on his right hand. And so ends the communal day.

But the koan is still there, and so is the picture of Roshi waiting like a lion ready to pounce at the special sanzen interview the next morning. One after another, silent forms slip out of bed. Some sit and meditate under the eaves of buildings; some like to go down to the cemetery; others prefer the woods: all silent figures sitting cross-legged in the moonlight. But by 3.30 in the morning, there are the straight lines of monks in bed, lying on their right sides and ready for the get-up bell.

Sesshin week gets worse and worse. Nerves are strained to breaking-point. The tension rises. Then, usually around the fourth day, there is a sudden lull, and every-one gets his second wind. What has for each been an individual life-and-death struggle, becomes a harmony. Face-to-face confrontations between Roshi and pupil are still intense, but they have a deeper multi-dimensional quality in this new atmosphere. The week continues like the last movement of a concerto building up to its great climax.

Monastic life is natural and cyclical. Spiritual growth takes place in rest periods alternating with sudden flowerings.

At the end of the three years of communal training, the monk’s future will be decided. Maybe he will go back to lay life. Zen training is highly regarded in the business and academic worlds. Or he may go home to the farm.

Perhaps he wishes to take office in a small local temple, the equivalent of our village priest. If he aspires to a larger place, he would not be accepted without at least 10 years of training in the monastery.

Of course, by this time he may love monastic life. If he stays on, he will probably be given a room of his own, be allowed to read and study again, and to a certain extent to follow his own tastes. He will take his turn in responsible posts in the running of the monastery, and perhaps even be a roshi himself one day.

To Ryutakuji

Two years after the visit of Soen Roshi, I wrote asking permission to enter Ryutakuji Monastery as a lay-woman for one term (three and a half
months), and enclosed an official letter of introduction from Toby. Back came the answer. I was accepted for one week only. The letter told me that it was a monastery (not a nunnery), and that there were no facilities for regular lay-people. However, I might come to a sesshin week when a few other lay-people would be present. I was recommended to go after that to a meditation place for women 60 miles away.

Oh dear! ONE WEEK! I certainly could not afford to go all the way to Japan for one week.

My next thought was: ONE WEEK, well, that’s fine, I defy anyone, Zen master or not, to get me out of that monastery once I’ve got my foot in the door.

The first impact was sheer beauty: a steep valley in the foothills of Mount Fuji; paddy-fields terraced all the way; a tiny village with a stony path leading to the forest on the hill-side beyond; stone steps flanked with masses of rhododendrons and huge butterflies; and up, up to the great monastery gate and a group of perfectly-shaped buildings with winged eaves hung with little bells. The background to everything indoors and out was always a sheer, breath-taking beauty.

Next day I had my formal interview with Roshi – I was terrified. I made three full length prostrations; I saw an inscrutable face with a cold courteous nod as I presented my gift. Of course, I asked to stay the whole term. A shrug of the shoulders – the monastery was run by and for monks. I asked again. No, there was nowhere I could sleep outside so that I could come in by day. I asked for the third time: PLEASE. Well, he would tell the chief monks to watch me very carefully during the week; and he rang his bell, which means instant dismissal. I bowed and left.

The next day a monk formally returned my gift, still wrapped.

‘Thank you, but Roshi does not need it.’

That was worse than a slap in the face. For a Japanese to return a gift is a deep insult. It is a very clear way of showing intense displeasure. During my interview I had felt that he had not recognized me, although with his phrase about the Heart Sutra he had turned my whole world inside out two years ago.

That sesshin was hell, but I loved every minute of it. However awful all the surface things were, inside my heart I knew that for this part of my life, here was where I belonged.

Such was my confusion during that week, that I only recall fleeting glimpses. And always the eyes of the three chief monks were on me: eyes watching when I lost my place in the sutra book; when it seemed impossible to manage my chopsticks; when I moved during meditation; eyes watching my dreadful ungainliness, and my constant struggle to keep in time with the beauty of all the movements of the monks in their flowing robes.

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I remember tagging along as the last of the long line and the terrible moments when I lost my end place in the file. We would cross the courtyard, kick off our straw sandals and go up the steps and through a chain of buildings. Then the procession would perhaps go through the Zendo and out the other side. As I could not follow through the monks quarters, I had to race back to the door where I had left my sandals; chase through the courtyards and gardens, and try to discover where they had got to so that I could tag along at the end again.

I was never in the right place at the right time. I had no idea what the various signals of bells, gongs and clappers meant. Everyone else knew what to do, but I did not. There was no-one to ask – they did not speak English. Anyway there was a silence rule, and if I bothered the monks, they certainly would not let me stay.

Hours on the meditation cushion I had expected, but somehow I had not realized that everything else would be even worse. How did one kneel back on one’s heels for an hour each day for the daily teisho (sermon)? And there was just the rush matting, not even a cushion – and one had to sit MOTIONLESS, with calm face, and eyes lowered in meditation because to twitch or to move would have been disrespectful. And was my spine quite straight? I could feel the eyes of one of the chief monks boring right through me. And then there was the kneeling back on one’s heels again for meals. During sesshin week one spends 12 hours each day either sitting cross-legged on a cushion or kneeling on the floor. By the end of the week the fronts of my feet were badly split and bleeding. They did not heal properly during all the time I was there.

Then there was more kneeling [this time motionless on hard-ribbed matting], for over half an hour while waiting for my first sanzen interview with Roshi. The monks call the sanzen room ‘the tiger’s cave.’

Despite all my efforts for two years to come and work under Soen Roshi, I dreaded presenting myself again to meet those inscrutable eyes.
I knew he disliked me; he had returned my ceremonial gift. He would, of course, give me 1 to 10 counting practice because I was a beginner. I hadn't been working at Zen as a novice for years beforehand.

Kneeling, waiting, the moment came. I struck the gong twice, as I had seen others do, and went along the passage, over a running stream, up the stairs, I made three full-length prostrations outside the door, three more inside, then three more face to face with Roshi. Miracle of miracles! I was given a koan!

And then that diabolical man said, 'Of course, each meditation period, must calm mind first. Start by counting breath 1 to 10. Whenever anything else at all flickers into mind, stop, go back to one. When you've reached 10 about 8 or 9 times, then koan.'

Believe me, I may have been officially given a koan: but back on my meditation cushion, could I ever get to it? – I hardly ever reached beyond counting. Such a medley of new experiences, and so much mental stress and physical pain seemed to put calmness of mind completely beyond possibility. And that was what I was there for.

For instance, I shall never forget that first sesshin morning. The get-up bell would ring at 3.30, but I knew I could never get up, wash, dress, cross the compound and be standing by the Great Hall ready quietly to slip into my place at the tail-end of the file in ten minutes. So I set my alarm for 3.15 a.m. It would be an hour's ceremony, then meditation, including Sanzen, for another hour-and-a-half. Nothing to eat or drink till 6 o'clock breakfast. But suddenly, Joy oh joy! At about 5 o'clock, a monk appeared with a huge teapot. We all bowed our thanks and held out our tea-bowls. I took a deep gulp of the lovely steaming liquid. It was hot, very salty water – brine. We were supposed to be striving so hard with our koans, that by now we should be sweating and need some salt intake.

Then there was the Chief Monk of Discipline walking round with the stick. Nowadays this kind of thing happens often outside Japan; but then one had only read about it, and it was unnerving at first. He has a flat stick, the *keisaku* and he paces round. You are never hit with it unless you request it by bowing. When one has been sitting a long time, the spine aches and shoulder muscles feel awful, and then it is very welcome. On the other hand, you may feel fine, but he thinks you need it. If so, he just stands in front of you, waiting, and you realize your number is up, and politely put hands together asking him to hit you!

I was just beginning to get the hang of things; knowing where I was supposed to be and when, by the time that terrible week ended. Needless to say, I had not yet spent much time on my koan, but I had been counting like anything. The whole thing had been a wonderful experience. The other lay-people packed up and went home, and I was
left alone with the monks. Can you imagine how anxious I was about the verdict?

I asked if I might see Roshi, and was told: tomorrow; then the next day, tomorrow; and then again – tomorrow.

At last a monk came. ‘Daw-san, Roshi.’ So off I went to his room. I had a coldly formal reception, never a smile. [And he had seemed such a radiant person when in London.] Nevertheless, I was given tea and told, ‘Monks don’t mind if you stay; but no proper room. You can sleep over storeroom.’

**My Probation Was Over**

How happy I was. One end of my room was the store for the picture scrolls, chests of robes and ceremonial altar hangings; and the other end was full of spare meditation cushions, mattresses, quilts, and bean-bags. These last were pillows – bags stuffed with dried beans and most uncomfortable. I helped myself to a mattress, a quilt, and then an extra quilt to roll up for a pillow and then I unpacked my bag, and made myself at home. Now this was REALLY my home for the next three months.

There were two windows. One was very large and would not open, but it looked out over the main courtyard and I could see everything that went on. The other was very small, but unglazed, and therefore would not shut. The room was up under the roof and got unbearably hot in summer, but fortunately a very large and friendly striped spider made a web right across my unglazed opening and kept all the mosquitoes out.

The really odd thing about my room was the way the monks treated it. Sometimes it was Daw-san’s room, and sometimes it was the storeroom. There would be a polite scratch on the door, and a monk bringing a letter. They practically fought each other to bring my post, and then stood waiting hopefully for the foreign stamp. Or at other times it would be a polite scratch and – ‘Daw-san, Roshi.’ But sometimes it was the storeroom: No scratch on the door – a monk flying straight in, and rushing to one of the chests, whether or not I happened to be washing or dressing. Once, when there was a panic on over a funeral, six monks came into my room before four in the morning. Eventually I found a lovely gilt screen and fixed myself a little dressing-corner.

A Zen monastery is a very strict affair: full-time Zen training is only for those who are completely dedicated. For instance, when a bell rings, one immediately drops whatever one is doing, and turns to next thing to be done. Suppose you are writing a letter home. At first, you finish the sentence and leave the rest till later. As the training proceeds, you finish only the word you are writing, and think ‘I’ll finish that tomorrow.’
Later, you hone it down finer and finer, until the bell rings, the pen drops [even in the middle of a letter in the middle of a word] and there is no thought of finishing at any time, but simply openness to the need of the moment.

One day, there was a snake in my room. It was quite big, about 4 feet long, and it disappeared among all the cushions and quilts. I went down to find a monk, and fortunately I happened to know the Japanese word for snake, hebi. Soon four monks arrived with the snake-kit. Two carried a long hollow piece of bamboo on ropes; one had a drum; and the fourth brought a giant pair of bamboo chopsticks.

The theory is that you make a noise with the drum that scares the snake out of its hiding-place. Then you catch its neck with the giant chopsticks, and push its head into the bamboo pipe. It can only wriggle forwards, so when it is in, you clap something over each end, carry it away in the pipe, and let it free in the forest. Simple!

Unfortunately, my snake wouldn’t be frightened out. [Maybe it had been caught that way before.] After much searching through a large area, with bedding stuffed high to the ceiling, the four monks gave up. All together, with much laughter, they gave me a graphically mimed description of how to suck a snake-bite wound and spit heartily. Off they went, chuckling.

The next few mornings, as I got up long before dawn and went barefoot down the stairs, I wondered whether the snake or I should be more scared if I stepped on it in the dark.

I happily started fitting in to the monastery routine. Morning ceremony and meditation. The ritual and the chanting always moved me deeply. To see and feel form perfectly carried out in order to let life flow through is awe-inspiring. Power builds up and builds up until there are voices chanting that are certainly not our voices. Then starting to make the power useful – our vows, always a very meaningful moment in the day; the circling sutra of the monks, channelling the rhythmic power into real live movement. Then the best moment of all: Roshi, the abbot, walking slowly to the open door and spreading the Dharma through the world. This is Reality.

Breakfast at 6 a.m: rice gruel, two salt plums, a piece of pickled radish, and hot water to drink. Then an hour spent on indoor cleaning. I was responsible for the founder’s shrine, where I did my meditation. It was set at right angles to the Zendo, and I could see the head monk, and hear his clappers and bell. They were signals for the beginning and end of chanting and meditation periods.

Then came communal outdoor work for the monks, which of course I could not join in, but I found a neglected part of the old graveyard and kept it swept and weeded.
At 10 o’clock was scripture reading for an hour. By a happy coincidence, the scripture for that term was Hui Neng’s Platform Sutra. I had brought only three books with me, and one of them was Hui Neng. (The other two were Suzuki’s Manual of Zen, which contains the chants for the morning ceremony, and a Japanese dictionary.)

The scriptures are not read, but are chanted for an hour. Japanese is a syllabic language, so anything can be chanted. On the first day, I knelt on the floor in formal position and listened. Roshi shouted at me, ‘Why you so lazy? Why you not chant scripture?’ He was always very rude to me, or else I was ignored as completely as a speck of dust on the ground. Until I got used to it, I felt very miserable. It hurt every time, but eventually I accepted it. I thought ‘I’m here to learn, and I am learning. It is so very kind of him to have me here at all. Why should I be unhappy just because he seems to dislike me so much?’

Anyway, this time I got out my Hui-Neng and obediently started chanting in English, and you really couldn’t imagine anything so funny in your life. In this beautiful hall, rows of yellow-faced shaven-headed monks solemnly chanting in Japanese, their black robes making beautiful flowing shapes against the translucent rice-paper windows; and there, right at the end of the very last row, a white woman in a Western cotton dress, equally solemnly chanting: ‘Learned-au-di-ence-your-own-Mind-is-the-Buddha-All-of-you-are-the-origin-Mind-which-produces-all-things . . .’

At first it seemed a silly way to read the scriptures, but later on it began to make sense. The syllables just roll on and on. We are not meditating on them, but on the koan. Suddenly one comes across a sentence that completely integrates with the meditation, and the whole thing lights up like a flash.

The main meal of the day is at 11 a.m., and we take our chopsticks and set of bowls in with us. The five black lacquer bowls fit...
neatly inside each other, and are easily carried in the pockets of the long
flowing sleeves. There is a good thick vegetable soup made with plenty
of soya flour and rice, a vegetable, pickled radish and tea. The meal is
strictly silent, and the food is served beautifully. Two monks enter carry-
ing heavy wooden rice tubs high over their heads. With a graceful move-
ment they dip right down to the ground in front of Roshi and the chief
monks. They are seated on the floor of course, so it is a long way down.
Then the monks get right up again and down in front of the next monks,
and so on right down to me at the far end.

I shall never forget one day when the monk with the great tub
swooped down in front of me. And instead of mounds of beautiful
white rice and a ladle; to my horror I saw piles of long, long slippery
noodles and a pair of serving chop-sticks as large as pokers. I knew per-
fectly well that I could not handle that situation gracefully, so – no lunch.
I bowed politely, indicating that I did not want any, thank you. But they
all realized why, and a great roar of laughter went right round the silent
room, Roshi included. The serving monk, grinning from ear to ear,
picked up the giant chopsticks, and filled my bowl to over-flowing.

Anyway, when the food is all served and getting cold, we chant for
about ten minutes: the Heart Sutra, invocations to Vairocana,
Shakyamuni, Maitreya, Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Avalokita, Prana, and
to all other Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions and the three
periods of time. Then come the Five Reflections:

First, let us reflect on our own work. Let us see whence this comes.

Second, let us reflect how imperfect our virtue is, whether we
deserve this offering.

Third what is most essential is to hold our minds in control
and be detached from greed, hatred, delusion.

Fourth, that this is taken as medicinal and is to keep our
bodies in good health.

Fifth, in order to accomplish the task of Enlightenment,
we accept this food.

Next, the first three mouthfuls of food are dedicated:

The first morsel is to destroy all evil;
The second morsel is to practise all good deeds,
The third morsel is to save all living beings,
so that we all attain Buddhahood.

After that, we may eat. There is plenty of food, and the hungry young
monks have their bowls refilled several times. I never take an extra serv-
ing because all my muscles are so aching and exhausted that my fingers
The Middle Way

are clumsy. We all finish together, taking our last mouthful of rice at the same moment that Roshi takes his. [He, too, takes only one serving, but he eats slowly so that the youngsters have time to eat as much as they need.] Then the tea comes round, and you hold up your largest bowl, the one that is still soupy. You do not drink it yet. Picking up the piece of pickled radish in your chop-sticks, you clean the smaller bowls and wash them up in the tea. Then you drink the tea and stack the bowls back inside each other – washing-up done. The whole thing is performed silently, like a ritual ballet. The koan is held in mind, and again, nothing but sheer beauty. Then comes the last little verse to be chanted before we all file off:

- Having finished the rice-meal, my bodily strength is fully restored.
- My power extends over the ten quarters and through the three periods of time, and I am strong.
- As to reversing the Wheel of cause and effect, no thought is to be wasted on it.
- May all beings attain miraculous powers.

After lunch is rest for one-and-a-half hours. Indescribable bliss, but of course there is still the koan. But when you are lying down comfortably it seems quite a different experience! There is communal work until 3 p.m; then a sermon, or teisho.

Zen masters do not preach from a pulpit. They sit at the end of the hall facing a statue of the Buddha and offer the Buddha their own understanding of the truth. It is their sanzen direct to the Buddha. The monks are allowed to be present and listen, but through their koan meditation, not thinking about it with the logical mind. Traditionally, during teisho, flashes of truth fly up like water in a fountain, and everyone receives at least a spark of insight.

Zen Master Rinzai once gave this short sermon:

‘There is one true man with no name who presides over your body of red flesh. He is all the time coming in and going out through your sense organs. You who have not yet experienced this, look, look.’

A monk came forward and asked:

‘Who is this true man with no name!’

Rinzai came down from his chair, took hold of the monk and said:

‘Speak! Speak!’ The monk hesitated, whereat the master let go of him saying: ‘What a worthless piece of stick is this true man with no name!’ and returned to his own quarters.
After this, there is meditation for an hour till the medicinal meal at 4 p.m. In hot climates where Buddhism originated the monks never eat after midday. But in cold countries, and especially where the monks do hard physical labour, more is necessary. Nothing is cooked specially for this meal, but if anything is left over from lunch, it is heated up. (Naturally, the cooks see that there is something left over!) And no chanting because it is not a real meal, only heated-up left-over rice and vegetables, the inevitable pickled radish, and hot water to wash the bowls with and drink afterwards. If local farmers have anything they cannot sell, they give it to the monastery. Once someone gave us a load of cabbages. For a whole week we ate cabbage for lunch, with cabbage soup, and then, at 4 o’clock, – heated-up cabbage.

Afterwards comes rest for three-quarters of an hour while the monks take their turn in the o-furo. The o-furo, or bath, is an astonishing thing, like a great old-fashioned metal copper pot, heated by a wood fire underneath that is fed from outside the bath-house. It has room for four people to soak at a time. Naturally you cannot touch the hot metal itself, but there is a wooden raft floating on top, and slowly you develop the art of standing on it, so that it sinks under you. Then you can soak in almost scalding hot water up to the chin. If you are clumsy, the raft tips, and you get blistered on red-hot metal. (You only really appreciate that nearly boiling water when your muscles are almost at screaming point during sesshin.)

Anyway, someone bangs the wooden clappers every few minutes. At the first clappers, four monks go in and prostrate themselves three times in front of a statue of a sage who got enlightened in a hot bath. Then they undress. At the next clappers, they go down to the stone floor and soap themselves clean, rinsing off with buckets of water, while four more come in to the undressing part. At the next clappers, the first four get into that strange tub full of clean, scalding-hot water, while the other fours move on. At the next clappers: the soakers get out and dress to make room for the next four, and so on. There can be sixteen monks there, in various stages.

These monastic rules were set down by Master Po-Chang in China, over a thousand years ago, and naturally there is nothing in them about a Western woman needing a bath. So there is no possibility during the monastic routine. However, late every evening, the dear kind monk in charge of o-furo went and lit the fire and heated up the water again. ‘Daw-san, o-furo.’

Of course, it was the same water that all the monks had used earlier. And although the principle is that the water is perfectly clean, because everyone rinses carefully before getting into it; nevertheless, it was
rather a peculiar colour, and I always wondered about a small fishing
net hung handily beside it. Never mind, I had a beautifully hot bath
every night and a very warm heart inside me for the kindness of that
monk and his extra work.

For three hours every evening, there was further meditation. The big
teapot came round, this time with real Japanese green tea, and a small
cake with bean-paste in it. This was the sugar intake for the day. At
9 p.m. was the closing ceremony and then bed.

There was three weeks of this until the next sesshin week, by which
time I felt like a seasoned campaigner. Now it was a familiar struggle, a
battle to be entered joyously, for all its hardships. One had learned little
tricks, such as a few dry tea-leaves hidden in a pocket. Chewing them
during a break is a great help.

The weeks flowed past until I had been there nearly two months. I
was always dirt underfoot, and the least and lowest tagging on the end
of the line, and there was always pain. But the koan training went on,
and there was a singing in my heart.

One day the monks were cutting trees for a new building. They were
very tired, and that night Roshi announced: ‘Hard work today. Half-
hour oversleep in morning.’ Laughing, he looked over his shoulder at
me. ‘You not deserve over-sleep. You not work.’

I thought ‘Do I take that as a joke or not? – Better not.’

So, in the pitch dark next morning, I went to my place, ready to sit
there for half-an-hour’s meditation before the get-up bell. Hardly had I
settled down on the cushion, than along came Roshi. ‘Ah, you up early!
– Come for walk.’

That early-morning walk was a gift that will always be with me. Up
through the forest to the ridge of the hill, sunrise over Mount Fuji with a
friendly Roshi – at last I was really accepted. What would I have missed
if I’d stayed in bed that extra half-hour!

At last, Roshi was prepared to give me individual teaching, but the
monastic rules were laid down a thousand years ago. There is literally
no time or opportunity in a monastery to teach a woman who cannot
even understand Japanese. So – bless his heart – they say a roshi treats
his pupils with grandmotherly kindness, and it is TRUE. For the rest of
my stay he got up half an hour earlier every day, just to help me.

He had been lovingly kind to me when he was being cruel, and now
he was being lovingly kind to me with all his laughing companionship.
It was all the same to him: the means towards the Enlightenment of all
living beings must be as skilful as possible, and I happened to be the one
needing help at this very moment.
In Attendance

He appointed me as an extra attendant, and this meant I could simply be present with him during a great deal of the day and accompany him when he went out. Thus I was led into many amazing situations, a few of which I shall tell you about. But it was the greatest privilege I have ever had in my life – just to be allowed to be in his presence. Mostly I had no idea what was going on because people were talking in Japanese, but I was there.

Soen Roshi was famous for his calligraphy and his haiku poems, several books of which had been published.

Many people brought gifts for the monastery. Exchanging gifts is a Japanese custom upon all occasions, but a monk owns nothing. Thus Soen Roshi occasionally had a session of writing some of his poems on square cards, called shikishi. This meant that he always had a gift of his own to give visitors.

Calligraphy is one of the Zen arts. The ink is in solid blocks, and you put a little water in the palette, grinding the ink block round and round. You go on adding a little more water or grinding a little more ink until you have the right quantity and the right thickness. The characters are written from top to bottom on the page and from right to left; and you will probably have noticed that the characters at the top are usually thicker, and that the bottom ones fade away. This is because when the brush is dipped into the ink, just enough is picked up to write one thought or sentence. Naturally the ink runs out and fades towards the end. Then the brush is refilled with enough ink for the next thought and so on. An important point is that in Zen nothing at all must be wasted. Therefore precisely the necessary amount of ink must be mixed, so that there will be not a drop left over. To grind ink for your teacher is one of those wonderful timeless occupations. For over 2,000 years, pupils have been doing this in exactly the same way, ready for their teacher to write or draw.

The Zen training is this: one sits peacefully grinding ink, koan held somewhere in awareness. Roshi will write something or other; you have no idea what or how much. Are you receptive enough to the universal need of the moment to know intuitively when to stop grinding? If there is ink left over, you are a bad and wasteful Zen student. But believe me, no one can be ruder than a Zen roshi, if the ink runs out before his new poem is finished. To be attendant to a roshi is a special kind of training.

Then there was the frequent ceremony of whisking thick green powdered tea to be offered to guests. This was infinitely more simple and austere than the court-style tea ceremony. At first he whisked the tea for
me on several occasions to demonstrate. Sitting alertly in zazen, I realized by some kind of osmosis that during each whisking he was meditating on one of the elements. I responded in Japanese fashion by murmuring a quotation to show my recognition of the element. ‘Earth has not anything to show more fair,’ or ‘Not I, not I, but the wind that blows though me.’ Although his spoken English was poor, he was very well read and was familiar with much English and German poetry. He knew Carlisle and Emerson, and once asked me wistfully, ‘Have you read all of Paradise Lost?’

I soon noticed that usually Roshi gave me brusque instructions, but that when he prefaced his words with ‘Gempo-Roshi told me . . .’, these teachings were things for which I was not yet ready. What had been passed to him by his teacher was to be held in my mind for future years. What richness for the future!

As a small example: when Soen Roshi washed his hands in a running stream, he always did so quickly and displaced little of the water. ‘Gempo Roshi told me no waste’ – this long before the days of ‘ecology’. It did not seem to be wasteful simply to change the direction of the water, but I stored it up.

One day someone gave Roshi a very fine melon, and he called some monks in to share it with him. I went to the kitchen for a large plate and knife. Oh dear – how to divide the melon into eleven equal parts? – Don’t think about it: look, meditate and cut. As I offered the plate first to Roshi he said ‘I take this piece, it cut with most zazen.’

When he made visits to the village and the nearest town, I often accompanied him, walking three steps behind and carrying any parcels. But on our early morning walks in the mountains, he liked to play at being a Western gentleman and we walked together. (However, I made sure my foot never touched the ground in front of his.)

One morning, a farmer dressed in his best came to pay a formal visit. His cow had calved during the night, and he was hoping Roshi would come and see it. That afternoon we visited the farm, and I have never been anywhere so dirty. This surprised me greatly, as usually everywhere in Japan is spotless. The barn and the cow were filthy. We accepted a cup of tea, and Roshi said a blessing over the calf. As we went back to the monastery he told me ‘Last year, farmer’s wife died. No woman to clean anything.’

Sometimes there was an old layman wandering around the monastery. He was stone deaf and had an old-fashioned hearing aid. He ran messages for the monks and did other odd jobs. Everyone had to shout to make him hear. Sometime later a monk told me his history. He was an old lag, but while in prison he had read a volume of Roshi’s poems. As soon as he got out, he came straight to Ryutakuji and had
Buddhist Meditation in The Essex Barn Chapel at High Leigh

Pictures by Joan Peaty

Venerable Myokyo-ni with Trevor Leggett
Remember the sound of the wind hitting the ancient structure moving the creaking timbers?
Sister Jottika meditating in the Barn Chapel
lived there ever since. He was not deaf at all, but listened to a radio through earphones all the time because he could not stand the silence.

Ryutakuji is in a steep valley of rice-paddies. Many with little terraced fields all the way down. At certain times of year there is so much work that every able-bodied person must help. I happened to be there at rice-planting time. While other crops are growing, a few fields are set aside for rice-seedlings; and, when the crops are harvested, the seedlings must be thinned and replanted in water. The fields must be dealt with in order – the highest field in the valley cleared, flooded, and planted, then the next field cleared, water allowed in from the top one, then planted; and so on, all the way down. A great communal effort is needed. Of course the monks help; after all, the villagers help them all the year round. Monks and farmers are mutually dependent.

All of us from the monastery went up to the highest field. A team of villagers was clearing, and another team was letting water in; but planting the seedlings was the really back-breaking work. By the time we arrived, soon after sunrise, the field was two inches deep in water with huge baskets of seedlings all along one side. Monks mingled with villagers, picked up handfuls of tiny rice plants, and stood ready in a long line. At the other end of the field was a long rope.

Everyone was ready and alert, monks still mindful of their koan. Roshi picked up one end of the rope, the oldest farmer the other. Roshi called HO, and the plunging rope marked a straight line in the mud. The planters ran across, planting seedlings along the straight line, and raced back for more plants. Roshi and the farmer pulled up the rope, moved forward a few inches – HO – down came the rope, the planters ran forward and the next row was planted. Back they ran – HO – and so it went on all day.

I was not nearly swift and efficient enough for this. My job was going up and down the steep hillside from paddy-field to monastery kitchen, fetching huge buckets of tea. The work went on steadily hour after hour, and the planters took breaks in turn for tea. How tired we all were by the end of the day, but: ‘The spirit of Zen is everyday life.’

My koan was simmering, but it never came to the boil. The only thing that consoled me was that once, before I came into the monastery, a monk had told me, ‘It’s like going for a walk across the moor. Some people experience a great storm, and others just walk on steadily through fine mist for hour after hour; but by the time they reach home, they are both equally soaked through.’

One day Roshi said, ‘Today, I go to people with leprosy. You want to come?’ Of course I said, ‘Yes, please.’ ‘You understand word, “leprosy”? Very bad. You sure you come?’ So he took me instead of the monk who
would normally have attended him.

It seemed that he gave the twenty-fifth day of each month to the leper colony. We set off immediately after breakfast. The colony was a whole valley, walled in by mountains and accessible by only one road. The first part inside was like a very small town: a large hospital, houses for doctors and staff, a dispensary, one or two shops, a Shinto shrine and a Buddhist temple.

Further on, set in fields and gardens, were long, low pleasant buildings for those who were completely crippled. They needed constant care and nursing within easy reach of doctors, but did not have to be in the hospital itself.

Higher up came an area of paddy-fields separating off the rehabilitation area. Unfortunately, even when leprosy is cured or goes into remission, people are very damaged, especially if the case was not found in its earliest stage; and often people are too frightened to go to a doctor at first. They hide it as long as they can. As soon as the disease seems to be under control, patients are sent to this rehabilitation centre. They tend the rice paddies, as they would at home, or are taught new crafts according to the amount of damage to their limbs. Trained staff work with them, and keep an eye out for possible recurrence.

Near the top of the valley is a perfectly ordinary village. When people are cured they may go home if they wish, but many are too disfigured to face the outside world. In one kind of leprosy, the head and face become distorted into a dreadful baboon or lion shape. In this village, healthy but disfigured people may live out the rest of their lives in peace, and their families may join them if they wish. Right at the top of the valley is a large statue of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. (Kannon is the Japanese name for Kuan-yin.)

When we arrived, Roshi, followed by me walking three steps behind, went straight to the temple, where those who wanted to come and were able to walk, were waiting. We all knelt or sat cross-legged on the matting while Roshi conducted a simple ceremony. Your heart would have wept had you been there. Those terrible lion-shaped heads, noseless faces, stumps of limbs. Couples sharing sutra-books, the one with fingers or finger stumps turning the pages. Such patient eyes. Never again will I call them lepers. They are people who happen to have leprosy. They obviously could not sit still for very long, so the ritual ceremony was short.

Then Roshi introduced me. They were nervous, as they had never seen a Westerner before and I could not speak Japanese. But I had brought a large box of sweets and we soon made friends. They rarely have visitors.

Then we all sat round comfortably while Roshi told them the story of
Hui Neng. You may know the story of this woodcutter who was enlightened when he overheard a sentence quoted from the Diamond Sutra: ‘Let the mind abide nowhere.’ He was inspired to go to a monastery where he matured his Enlightenment and eventually became the Sixth Patriarch of Rinzai Zen.

We Zen students are very familiar with his adventures in the monastery and afterwards, but monastic life and higher training were right outside the orbit of these people. And, not knowing Japanese, I wondered what Soen Roshi was telling them.

He told them about Hui Neng while he was still a wood-cutter. He happily invented things that happened in the forest, and what he said to his mother when he got home and what she said to him making up stories that were meaningful to his audience. He talked for nearly an hour while we all sat sucking sweets. Every now and then, he threw in an English sentence for me – ‘He STILL cutting wood’ – and a happy chuckle.

After that came one of those special moments. Roshi said, ‘Now we chant to Kannon.’ There is a very short verse to Kannon, which fortunately I knew by heart in Japanese.

We started very slowly with Roshi’s deep sonorous voice leading us in chanting this little verse over and over again. In the monastery, we usually repeated it three or seven times, but now over and over, over and over, faster and faster. By the time we had chanted it a few hundred times, we were chanting so fast that the whole world was spinning. And, with the catalyst of his voice, we were all spun right out of existence. All those people were lifted right out of their sad, unhappy bodies. Then slower and slower, until we dropped back again and saw that the incense stick he had lit to Kannon had burnt right down.

Afterwards we walked slowly in procession up the valley, visiting each of the areas with as many as could walk coming with us. On the way, we all chanted. Then at each place, Roshi was joking, telling stories and obviously they loved him deeply. Right at the top was a statue of Kannon, with a huge bronze bell. Japanese bells do not have tongues, but by the side is a great wooden beam or tree-trunk, slung on a rope. Roshi pulled back the beam and struck the bell, then again. I struck it twice; then so did all the others who had formed the procession. Boom, Boom. I shall never forget the sound of Kannon’s voice booming right across the valley.

After we went down again the doctors gave us lunch. For them too, living in this isolated valley, Roshi’s visit was a great treat. Then he motioned me not to follow him, and I was left behind talking to the doctors, while he went on a round of the hospital visiting the very ill patients.
Zen appeals very deeply to all those who practise martial arts. Soen Roshi himself came from an old samurai family and was greatly respected, especially by all sumo wrestlers, because Tai-Ho, a National Sumo Champion of Japan, was one of his Zen pupils. Sumo wrestlers are huge men, and every ounce is muscle. They have splendid robes and fantastic hair-styles. This form of wrestling is very civilized as no one tries to injure his opponent. A circle is demarcated, purified with salt and water and then, with great ceremony the contenders and the referee take their place.

The wrestlers take deep inhalations, perform majestic ceremonial lunges, and approach the centre of the circle. As their heads near each other, their deep breathing should be in harmony. If not, they withdraw and start again. If the breathing corresponds, they flash into action, each trying to force the other to touch the ground outside the ring with any part of his body. Sometimes the match is over instantaneously, as one man prods with iron fingers at a point that will disturb his opponent’s centre of gravity. Sometimes the bout lasts several minutes as the massive weights force each other relentlessly to a conclusion.

It was the sumo season, and Tai-Ho was defending his championship for the third time. Of course there was no television at Ryutakuji. So when the matches were on, Roshi liked to go down to a local farm and watch how his pupil was progressing. He would go into the kitchen, fetch a saucer of salt and a saucer of water and place them ritually in front of the set – the television ceremony – and then we would sit in zazen while the contest lasted. I was very impressed: fancy having a Dharma brother who was a sumo champion!

One morning on an early walk we came to a small, flat area, and Roshi, who was a little dot of a man, said with great dignity, ‘Once I fought Tai-Ho here.’ ‘Who won?’ I asked in my crass Western manner. ‘I did, of course,’ came the rejoinder, and I did not doubt it for a moment.

During one sesshin week a trainer had permission to bring his whole team of sumo wrestlers to practise zazen for the week with the other lay-people. After all, if Soen was Tai Ho’s Zen teacher, maybe one of this group would be a future champion. I shall never forget the picture of the Great Hall with small shaven monks meditating opposite a row of huge sumo wrestlers with combs in their hair – a wonderful contrast.

After the end of the sesshin, I was in attendance while Roshi was saying goodbye to the visitors. He had a long talk with the sumo-trainer, and the upshot of it was that one of the young men was to be left behind as a layman for a fortnight. Roshi introduced me. He explained that Hana was a very fine fighter, but there was just a little something miss-
ing that it was hoped more Zen training would provide. Hana blushed a fiery red at being introduced to a Western woman. He was so shy and gentle, and the name ‘Hana’ means flower – I was irresistibly reminded of Ferdinand the Bull.

As there was no opportunity in the timetable for special training for a sumo wrestler, Hana joined our early morning walks. Naturally he must not stop his normal training, so we joined in: a huge sumo wrestler, a tiny roshi, and a Western woman, all practising sumo lunges and stances on the mountainside in early morning star-shine. What a sight it would have been for any passer-by!

Before he left, Hana drew me his name on a shikishi calligraphy card, and signed it with a huge thumb-print dipped in red ink. I had acquired yet another Dharma brother.

On one occasion, I visited Kyoto because I had promised Toby to see how Irmgard,1 another of his students, was getting on at her monastery. Then I had to choose a gift to take back to Roshi. This was a nerve-wracking experience because when I arrived, I had presented a formal gift to Roshi and he had rudely returned it to me. What should I take? With all my heart I wanted to take him the best gift I could possibly find.

One shop in Kyoto is famous for incense, and I smelt all their finest ones, but none seemed right. Desperate, with my very poor Japanese, I asked for the owner – haven’t you anything better? He showed me the best in the shop, but I had already smelt that and said no. He looked at me rather respectfully and then invited me into a room behind the shop and sent for tea. Then he produced five or six really superb things; and one was exactly what I wanted. It was just a piece of natural wood from a tree whose name I did not recognize, but the fragrance was wonderful. A small piece of the incense wood was cut off with a jeweller’s saw, ceremoniously wrapped in red paper and placed in a box; a simple box made of white pine, but pleasantly shaped. This incense was so rare and precious, that the sawdust was wrapped in a special paper and given to me separately. Now I was ready to return to the monastery.

I reported back, made my prostrations and offered my gift. Soen Roshi welcomed me and placed the unopened packet on his Buddha-shrine.

The next day he looked at me suspiciously and said, ‘Who chose incense: it very good.’ I replied ‘I did.’ ‘Well, who helped choose?’ ‘No one I simply chose what I hoped you would like.’

‘Ah, zo desu! You have very good nose. It worth training.’ And, to my astonishment, he trained it! He sent to Tokyo for one of his pupils

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1 Irmgard Schloegl, later to become the Venerable Myokyo-ni, founder of Shobo-an Rinzai Zen Temple in London.
who teaches incense smelling.

When she arrived the next day we had a delightful party. She was a charming person, in the most beautiful kimono. We had a special tea ceremony from Soen Roshi, and then my incense-smelling lesson. My new teacher lit a small charcoal brazier and produced a tiny pan and a box containing many little packets.

One pinch at a time, powders were dropped in the pan and wafted over the heat: cherry-wood, gingko, apple, sandal-wood, camphor and many things whose name I did not know.

It was like a concert – a heavy perfume, slowly allowed to drift away, then two or three light ones quickly after each other, another slow, heavy one, then some allowed to overlap and form a fragrant chord. At the end, Roshi said ‘Thank you for very good incense. Here is memento.’ He gave me back the white pine box, and had written on the lid:

Every day is a good day.

He then said,
‘Be like this box – empty inside. Every day a good day on outside.’

O-BON

One day it was getting near O-bon, a Shinto folk festival when for ten days in mid-July each year the dead come back to visit. Houses are decorated. The family members who have died are especially remembered; stories are told about them, and their favourite food is served at meals. There are ceremonies at the family shrines in each house. On the last night huge bonfires on the surrounding hill-tops light the way as all the spirits depart.

Roshi said to me, ‘You know what O-bon is?’ I nodded. ‘During O-bon two monks visit every family in the village. Two monks visit every family in the town. You and I,’ he ended triumphantly, ‘we do Tokyo!’

I gulped, bowed obediently, and went off to pack a bag for a few days. Ryutakuji is about 60 miles from Tokyo. Train journeys with Roshi were a delight. Sometimes we would tuck up our feet cross-legged and meditate. Then I would receive a few words about my koan; occasionally encouraging, always pithy; and sometimes downright rude. Sometimes he told me stories (usually about people who worked HARD on their koan, not like Dew, the name he used for me.) ‘Dew not last very long on flower. You better hurry with koan. No time for wasting!’

He had a travelling tea-ceremony kit, and expected me to whisk the thick green tea in a properly formal manner – not easy on a fast train. But we both enjoyed it all immensely. He enjoyed everything in life, and I’m not too bad at enjoying things either.
When we arrived in Tokyo, we went to a Pure Land temple where we would stay for the night. Pure Land, or Jodo, is a Faith School of Buddhism in which one recites the name of Amida Buddha over and over again, hoping to be reborn in his Western Paradise after death. I never could cope with this idea, and one day during one of our early morning mountain walks, I had said to Roshi, ‘I don’t understand Pure Land Buddhism. How can one start with faith in Amida Buddha first before knowing there is something to believe in?’ He did not answer, but changed the subject.

Now, here we were, arriving at a Pure Land temple. This was his Zen answer. We would stay here and I could see for myself. An elderly nun came to offer us supper before settling us into rooms next to each other. She brought Roshi a typical Japanese tray of soup, rice etc. but she had met Westerners before and brought for me the most wonderful food I had seen for weeks. A tray with bread and cheese and an apple and a glass of milk. Roshi looked horrified and waved it away, but I explained that this was the food monks ate in Western Monasteries, and managed to save my supper. Japanese people dislike milk and all milk products. They say it makes Westerners smell very odd.

Next morning I was awakened about 3 a.m. by Roshi’s sonorous voice singing Wagnerian opera in the next room, in German. I recognized this as my get-up bell, and hastened into my clothes, wondering what the day would bring. Slipping quietly through the temple corridors, I met him at the main gate, and off we went in the dark in the suburbs of Tokyo – quite a change from Mount Fuji.

Tied to a house was a guard dog that started barking. Houses in Japan are made of wood with paper windows. They are so easily broken into that guard dogs are common. They are never taken out, but kept tied all the time so that they are fierce. Roshi looked at dog. Dog went on barking. ‘Dog wants walk.’ He stepped into this stranger’s garden, unhooked barking dog, passed me the chain and on we went. Me three paces behind and dragging surprised dog. In public I always walked three paces behind the abbot and carried any parcels.

After a mile or two, we reached a hilly parkland area with a steep waterfall. Roshi announced ‘Fudo Temple’, as though that explained everything, and stepped straight into the heart of the cascade, chanting! He looked surprised that I had fallen more than three steps behind and said ‘Come!’ I thought of the rest of the day in Tokyo, I only had two cotton dresses with me, and said firmly: ‘No, I’m holding dog.’ He looked very disapproving, but continued to chant for about five minutes, and then he came out of the water and shook himself. It was the only time during my stay I was disobedient to my teacher.

Up the hillside we went to a temple dedicated to the Bodhisattva
Fudo, the aspect of ourselves that stands firm in the heat and cold of Samsara. Ah, yes, heat and cold. Heat and cold opposite. That explained the waterfall! Because here was a wonderfully beautiful fire ceremony being performed on the altar. There was a certain mystery, and gradually a profound sense of universal presence focused and polarized between the fire altar with the robed monks chanting around it and Roshi, silently majestic next to me. Even the dog sat peacefully. Quietness, dawn colours over Tokyo spread out beneath us. Then a huge flare from the altar at first sight of the rising sun. Nothing could have been more primaeval. The chanting took on a new tone as we all prostrated.

What a start to my first full day in Tokyo!

On our way back, a strange woman suddenly noticed the shocking sight of an abbot in robes that were dripping wet. She clucked like a hen, hustled us both into her house. (I hitched dog to gate-post.) In a few seconds, she had Roshi out of those robes and in a dressing-gown. She washed the robes, and while we were having a good breakfast, well – rice and seaweed, she ironed them dry. We set off again back to the Pure Land temple, returned dog to his own home, and went in to find a ceremony in process.

Pure Land – calling upon the name of Buddha in pure faith, knowing that, if you do so, when you die you will be reborn in a lotus in the Western Paradise of Amida. This was why Roshi had brought me, to experience it for myself. He found us two little drums shaped like wooden fish, and we happily sat down on the floor and started banging our drums and calling rhythmically upon the name of Amida: namu Amida Buddha, namu amida butsu, namu amida butsu, The chant quickened: namuamida butsu, namuamida butsu, namuamida butsu. But for a moment my concentration flickered. I felt a painful nudge in the ribs. ‘Be Interested!’ came a fierce
whisper. *Namu amidabu, namu amidabu* for the next hour.

Outside afterwards, I was firmly told, ‘You understand now. Western Paradise inside you. Amida Buddha inside you too. You call him hard enough, he wake up inside you; and you wake up too. Faith Path all right.’

Later on that morning I was sent off to fetch something; and while I was out the heavens opened, I got completely drenched. There was no kind lady to iron my dress dry, I just stayed wet and dripped.

When I returned, Roshi just looked at me and said, ‘Ah! Zo!’ Yes, ‘I know,’ I thought. ‘That will teach me not to do as I’m told. I might just as well have gone under the waterfall. Maybe that cold wet shock would have sharpened my susceptibilities, so that I would have experienced the fire ceremony in a still deeper dimension. One day I’ll learn to be obedient.’

O-bon in Tokyo! We went to house after house, performing ceremonies at family shrines. Try to imagine the biggest room in the house with the shrine decorated and all the family in their most beautiful kimono seated on cushions in neat rows. Roshi was seated facing the shrine chanting with his bell and a little wooden drum and looking wonderful in his best robes; I was kneeling on a cushion directly behind him, feeling silly wearing a Western cotton dress in such formal surroundings. What was far worse, I had not the slightest idea of what I was supposed to do as attendant at such a ceremony.

I knew the chanting must be non-stop and, as there were only two of us chanting, I anxiously watched the back of Roshi’s neck so that we didn’t both stop for breath at the same time. I had never done any chanting at all until two months before, and I was nowhere near word perfect. I had never worked very hard at learning the words by heart because without understanding the language it was parrot-like anyway; and one among all those monks in the monastery didn’t seem to matter. Now my sins of omission were finding me out. I wasn’t even sure which ones were prayers, for which I should have my hands together; and which ones were not – for them, my hands should be in meditation position. I could not follow Roshi’s example because he was too busy banging his drum. Then I realized that all the family were copying my position, so my mistakes were being compounded – oh dear! Then, while all this was going on, I was frantically counting heads in order to have the right number of incense sticks prepared, ready for each person to take up to the shrine.

Most families were all right, but sometimes there was real grief if someone had died during the year. In one family, the mother had died very recently and left seven small children. It was heart-breaking to see
their little faces as I gave each one his incense stick to light for mother at
the shrine. The smallest was only about three; but when it was his turn,
he clutched his stick and went up all by himself like a hero. He stood
solemnly there for a minute making his prayer and then scampered back
to hide his face in his sister’s skirt, so that no one should see tears and
think him a baby.

The ceremony itself never seemed to be the same in two houses run-
ning. Once, taking my cue from Roshi, I found myself chanting Namu
Amidabu Namu Amidabu. When we got outside afterwards, I asked why.
‘Oh,’ said Roshi cheerfully, ‘Most of the family are Zen, but an uncle
who died this year was Pure Land, so I put that bit in for him.’

Of course each family had prepared a special meal for us. Wonderful
food, course after course, – and I had been on rice and pickled radish for
two months. But just as I started to enjoy myself, Roshi nudged me in
the ribs: ‘Not eat much, more next house.’

He was so right. There was more next house, and the next. How do
you politely do justice to 10 – 15 meals a day for five days, when they
have been specially cooked for you – and straight after a sparse monastic
diet?

By now I had visited with Roshi several poor houses in our own
village near the monastery. But these houses in Tokyo were very differ-
ent: they were beautiful mansions. One family we visited was the
Mikimoto pearl people. Imagine what kind of house they had! Traditional homes that no Westerner ever visited. These families were
shocked because Roshi was always attended by a monk on his ceremoni-
al visits. But Roshi thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to shake his peo-
ple out of their traditional ways. He would say ‘I knew you would like
me to bring Daw-san,’ knowing they hated it. ‘I should like you to show
her your treasure-house.’ And I would be shown the most wonderful
works of art you can imagine. I was so fortunate.

Zen and the arts are closely related and many of Roshi’s pupils were
extremely gifted. One of them made and played the Bamboo Flute. He
was very famous, and I felt honoured when we visited his home and he
played specially for me. Another time we visited an Academy of Music,
and the principal told his students to arrange a concert of koto-playing
especially for me while he talked to Roshi.

Hours and hours at each place were spent sitting and kneeling. Often
I had a sudden panic in case my legs would not support me in getting
up, but somehow I managed.

One family was celebrating the centenary of a famous ancestor, and
there was a grand reception in an enormous long room. My Japanese
manners were hardly suitable for such a social occasion. However, I
knew my position as an attendant [and a woman at that] so I sat down on a cushion just inside the door. Our hostess welcomed me and invited me further in. After the usual three refusals I allowed myself to be taken further into the hall, continued to excuse myself from further importance and sat on a cushion half-way up the room. More and more guests arrived, and then more. Gradually, to my horror, I realized that our host was talking to Roshi at the far end, which was otherwise empty, and everyone else was crowded into the area between me and the door. I had not realized that as Roshi’s attendant I was in the position of second guest, and no-one else could pass me until I moved further into the room!

Fortunately I recognized a young girl who had attended the last sesshin at Ryutakuji, but had ended up by sobbing her heart out during the last night. I went over to talk to her, which broke the impasse. Her English was very meagre, and my Japanese was practically non-existent, but we managed to understand each other, and I discovered that she was the daughter of the house. For three years now her family had wanted her to wed, but she had begged to wait until she had achieved *kensho*, the first break-through of Enlightenment. This time, her family had said, ‘One more sesshin only, and then you must marry.’ Alas, she had failed to break through her koan, and now would not have another chance till she was 60 years old. (The oriental zodiac has twelve animals and five elements, each sign travelling through a succession of elements until a cycle of 60 years is completed. After that, it is reckoned that a person has fulfilled all natural duties, and has the freedom to behave independently.) A young bride is given many instructions, including the fact that it is not permissible for her to die before her husband. Otherwise who would look after him?

Anyway, she performed some delightful dances to entertain the company and then we adjourned to the banquet. Now I was really in trouble. In front of each seated guest was placed a small lacquered chest of drawers. Each drawer held one beautifully prepared course, and I had no idea which food should be dipped in which sauce, nor in what order they should be eaten. I was, of course, sitting next to Roshi and looked at him helplessly. Bless him, he saw my difficulty and immediately changed from being a brusque Zen master [whom everyone expected to behave in an extreme manner] into a polite well-mannered gentleman who ate his food with great decorum. I was saved. All I had to do was to watch him and copy to the best of my ability. After all, I am used to doing that.

Afterwards people were talking, moving about, signing books. Then, suddenly, came the peak point of the whole day as far as I was concerned. Whatever else I was doing, part of my consciousness was with
Soen Roshi all the time. He picked up his brush to write in a book for someone. As he held the brush poised, the whole universe filled with a silent grandeur. Voices in the room died away. Even people who were not watching found their conversation coming to a halt. As the brush moved on the paper, the whole universe disappeared, and there was only this. Suddenly, someone found it too much, said something quickly: and all the thousand and one things flowed back into being again. No more can be said about this. This was the true Centre, and this I shall find for myself.

That night we stayed at the house of Roshi’s younger brother. His wife offered us an exquisite court tea ceremony that I appreciated very much, especially having practised the austere monastic version.

We had a family memorial ceremony for the mother of these two brothers who had died a few years before. During the service, Roshi smiled at me and said ‘Daw-san will recite the Heart Sutra in English for my mother.’ In my heart I smiled too. Yes, he had known all along which of Toby’s pupils had come to Ryutakuji.

Next morning, Roshi said to his brother, ‘Take Daw-san out this morning and show her Tokyo.’ Brother worked for one of the large computer firms, and he phoned his boss to explain that his elder brother wished him to take a visitor sight-seeing. This surprised me, as it would hardly have been a suitable excuse in England for not coming to work. When I thought about it, I realized that, in their view, complete loyalty within his family would be the equivalent of complete loyalty to the firm, and therefore quite acceptable.

I enjoyed the tour, and it was wonderful to spend a few hours without sitting or kneeling on the ground. He taught English in his firm to people on the foreign sales staff: and when we returned home, I was able to make a special cassette for him by reading aloud computer technical terms that were not on the ordinary commercial language tapes. I was happy to be able to do something for his company to repay them.

It was just as well my knees were a little better, because that evening Roshi visited the Tokyo University Zen Group. I found this fascinating. While in Japan I was able to watch his technique when teaching such extremely different groups as university students, middle class lay people in the Mishima Group, factory workers, and people with leprosy.

It was a joy to see the different approach to teaching each group. No Kannon chant hundreds of times at the university! He met each group on its own level. How helpful such experience would be for my own teaching later on.

A very rich man had died recently who was one of Roshi’s Zen pupils. Also he had been a patron of several Zen artists. At the O-bon memorial
ceremony, naturally his protégés were present with the family. One of the artists, Mr Murashima, had become famous. Indeed, I already owned a book bought in England *The Iron Flute*, illustrated by him, so he was internationally known. Mr Murashima also was a Zen pupil and an old friend of Soen Roshi.

When the ceremony was over I hoped I had not made too many mistakes with so many people present who really knew what they were doing and naturally there was a very fine feast.

After the food, and while the saki was still being enjoyed, the widow bowed low to Roshi and said, ‘This has been a very special day. I should be most grateful for some mementoes of the occasion.’ Roshi nodded benignly, and out came papers, cards, ink-palettes and brushes.

Now a Zen pupil always has the right to challenge his teacher. He may, on any occasion, give one of the formal challenges, such as ‘Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?’ or he may make his own, a challenge suitable for the occasion. Naturally, he is not factually asking for information about Bodhidharma. What he is really saying is: ‘You are my master. Show me your Zen. Let me see your real nature, your original self in action. I am eager to experience it. Show me.’

Mr Murashima took his opportunity. He bowed low to Roshi and said, ‘I challenge you to a picture.’

Not a moment’s hesitation ‘Certainly’ said Roshi. Dead silence throughout the room – here was an impossible situation. A famous artist and Roshi would each brush-paint a picture. Naturally the skilled and famous artist would paint the better picture. But naturally the master would paint a better picture than his pupil.

How could a non-artist paint a finer and more outstanding picture? And yet he is the master. There was complete silence as our hostess spread a 3 foot length of paper in front of each man. Deep meditation – both duellists sinking deep into their origin.

I sat grinding the ink for Roshi. Here was a test of my Zen too. Roshi had brought me here as an adequate attendant. Here is a 3 foot length of paper; and for all I know, he may draw something in fine line, or it may be a great powerful heavy picture. Let me not disgrace him. There must be just the amount of ink he wants, and of just the right thickness.

I, too, try to sink deep into the origin of things and open to the need of the moment. In English duels, the man challenged had the choice of weapons, and here in Japan too. With a sudden, tiger-swift movement Roshi was in action. ‘We will draw A ROSE with a rose.’

He strode over to a vase of roses in the niche, took one out, deftly stripped off the loose outer petals, sat down, dipped the heart of the rose in the ink, and using it as a brush, made a few quick strokes. There on the paper was a rose. The famous artist, stripped of the skilful use of his
own paintbrush, also drew a rose with a rose. There was no doubt in the situation as to who was the master, and who was the pupil.

**Introduction to My Lineage**

After we returned to the monastery, Soen Roshi started introducing me to my lineage. First was his own teacher, Gempo Roshi. I heard many stories about Gempo Roshi. During the war he saw the people of the nearby village starving. He went to the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, asked to see the Emperor, and pleaded with him to stop the war ‘because the people in our little village of Sawaji are starving.’ Can you imagine how the people of Sawaji village loved Gempo Roshi? ‘He went to the Emperor and told him about US.’

Behind the monastery, a flight of wooden steps cut into the hillside went up through a peaceful moss garden to a small hut called Gempo Roshi’s room. There Gempo Roshi as an old man had spent his last years, and died. His room was still beautifully kept – always fresh flowers in the niche, always a scroll of his own calligraphy or painting. His cushion was kept plumped up and comfortable. On one side of the cushion was his little reading desk, and on it a copy of the Diamond Sutra. Gempo Roshi had read the whole of the Diamond Sutra every day.

On the other side of the cushion was a cup of tea, freshly made every morning and evening, and sometimes an extra one in-between. It was clear that Gempo Roshi’s spirit was still there.

Soen Roshi used his own room downstairs for all formal interviews, but went up to Gempo Roshi’s room sometimes to relax – reading, writing poems. He also used it whenever he went into retreat for a few days. I sometimes had the duty of making tea for Gempo Roshi.

It is traditional that a Zen master should die in some way meaningful and helpful to his students. I had read about this in my Zen history books. I must tell you about my favourite one, who died in the nineteenth century.

Master Ying Feng decided the time had come to die. First he addressed his monks, ‘Zen masters in many places have accepted death either sitting in meditation, or lying down. These I have witnessed myself. Did anyone ever pass away standing up?’

Someone said ‘Yes, once.’

The master asked, ‘Was there anyone who stood upside down while he took his last breath?’

The monks answered ‘We have never heard of that!’

Then the master stood upside down, his robe miraculously draping his body, and passed away. The body remained upright. When his followers tried to put the body on a bier to be cremated, he was still immovable as a mountain peak. People streamed from far and near to
look at him.

Master Ying Feng had a sister who was a nun. She arrived, went right up to him and scolded, ‘Old brother, for ages you’ve been difficult, and even now you must show off after you’re dead!’ She gave him a shove with her hand and he wobbled and fell flat on the ground.

It seems that the tradition is still very real. Certainly the manner of Gempo Roshi’s dying, in 1961, has been tremendously meaningful to the monks I knew who worked under him.

At the age of 96 he was almost blind and very frail; he was no longer able to teach, or to work about the monastery. Calling his monks around him, he said he had decided it was time for him to go.

He quoted: ‘A day of no work, is a day of no eating.’

From that moment Gempo Roshi ceased eating. Can you imagine how his pupils felt? They loved him so much, and felt so much gratitude for his teaching, and there he was, dying in front of their eyes.

At last one of them went up and scolded him: ‘How unkind you are, Roshi! Look, it’s winter – snow and ice everywhere and a bitter sharp wind. And you are planning to die now! Think of all us poor monks, standing around for hours in the freezing cold during funeral ceremony!’

Gempo Roshi chuckled and said ‘All right. I’ll wait awhile.’ He started eating again, and then died quietly when the weather was better.

When I heard about this, I felt very happy to make my grand-teacher a cup of tea now and then. He was such a good person to have in the family.

Then, I was introduced to Zen Master Hakuin, the Founder of our monastery in the seventeenth century. I felt I already knew him rather well, because I had spent many hours sitting in the Founders Room, under the gaze of his statue. Being a woman, I could not sit in the Zendo where the monks slept and meditated, so I did my zazen in the company of Master Hakuin. I was responsible for keeping him and his shrine-room dusted and polished.

He is the most famous Zen abbot in Japan, because in the seventeenth century the Zen spirit was at a very low ebb and he revived it. I felt proud to be related to him, however distantly.

His grave was in the grounds of the monastery. We held a ceremony there every month, although only a small part of his ashes was there. The main part was in the other monastery he founded, where he spent most of his life.

He was also a poet, and we frequently chanted his Song of Meditation. It starts:
Living beings are primarily all Buddhas. It is like ice and water, Apart from water no ice can exist; Outside living beings, where do we find Buddhas? [and it ends:] This very earth is the Lotus Land of Purity, And this body is the body of the Buddha.

There are many stories about Master Hakuin.

Once a girl in his village had a baby, and her father beat her to make her name the father. She was afraid, and at last she sobbed that it was the monk Hakuin.

The furious father brought the baby to the temple, and said, ‘You’d better look after this child; it is yours.’ Hakuin said, ‘Ah! Is that so?’ He kept the child, and arranged for milk.

His parishioners were disgusted and shunned him. He became very unpopular, and no one gave food to his temple.

Later on, the girl owned up. The ashamed father came to Hakuin – ‘I have come for the baby. I have found out that it is not yours at all.’ ‘Ah! Is that so?’ said Hakuin.

Hakuin’s skilful means were remarkable.

One of his numerous lay-disciples was worried about his miserly old father and begged Master Hakuin to think of some way of curing his greed for making money.

As mentioned before, the Pure Land School has a practice of repeating the name of Amida Buddha, so that it becomes a long chant: Namuamidabu, Namuamidabu, Namuamidabu . . . . . .

Hakuin was a Zen master, of course, not Pure Land, but he did not mind what practice he used as long as it was helpful. He offered the old man a small coin for every time he said a rosary of Namuamidabu. If he said 100 rosaries a day, he would receive 100 coins.

The old man was delighted – such an easy way to earn money. Each day, he said 100 rosaries and came to the temple to collect his money. But after a while he stopped coming. Hakuin sent for the son, and said ‘How is your father?’ Father was now so engrossed in saying Namuamidabu that he was forgetting to keep count. Hakuin said, ‘Leave him alone for a while.’ A week later, the old man came himself with shining eyes, to thank Hakuin for the Enlightenment he had gained.

You may well wonder about the original training of these great masters. In Rinzai Zen four stages take place during the training of Four Major Koans.
It may well take several years for someone to find out whether it is possible to break his or her first koan. But if it is achievable, after the logical mind has tried everything it can and finds itself completely trapped, the energy goes on building up and building up like a river behind a giant dam. At last the mind is forced to be aware of a higher dimension and has a glimpse of what lies behind the pairs of opposites, the duality of our everyday lives.

After this first real breakthrough – not merely a sparkle such as we all get from time to time, but a great flashing depth of insight – the master will give a number of minor koans to consolidate the experience. Only when he is sure that there is a real facility to move between ordinary relative awareness and the new level athwart it (at right angles), will he give a major koan belonging to the second group.

This process is repeated, for those few who are able to attain it, a third, and finally a fourth time. At last, the awakened one has fully experienced four levels of awareness in different dimensions, each athwart the other, until with the fourth right-angle, he becomes ‘the fully rounded man’.

At this stage, when Layman P’ang experienced the totality expressing itself through him, he sang, ‘How miraculous! How wonderful! I draw water! I carry fuel!’

Now comes a deep choice. It is like a finely-trained pianist. Will he choose to become a concert artist, or will he wish to teach others? Until now, the training is the same for both. But the finely-trained Zen artist may wish to remain in the monastery and deepen his enlightenment, or it may seem right to try to become a teacher.

In the second case, his roshi will tell him, ‘I have taught you all I can. Go away from the monastery for a few years and ripen your experience.’

He may retire into the forest by himself, or he may return to the life of the busy world. And not until some years have passed will he return to his teacher and perhaps, be given the seal of approval, in his turn earning the right of teaching pupils who will call him Roshi.

So many rich and varied experiences I was given. One day, we were in the local town Mishima, and there was time to spare before Roshi’s next appointment. We went to sit in the park. He said ‘Zazen’, so we sat on the park bench and did zazen. After a while, some white peacocks came out of the bushes, then some more. They did not approach quickly, but they obviously liked the atmosphere and came nearer and nearer until we were closely surrounded by about a dozen white peacocks.

After a while, Roshi ended zazen. He jumped up briskly and said ‘Fair.’ Off he went, with me three steps behind, wondering what on earth he meant by ‘Fair’.

IN A ZEN MONASTERY
The Middle Way

But, as usual, he meant exactly what he said, and we were off to the fair. Going to a fairground with an abbot dressed in full robes, sounds bizarre, but there we were! We strode right through the swings and roundabouts. What he wanted to show me was a sideshow. It was an octagonal room with its roof, walls and floor all made of mirrors, just as described in the Kegon Sutra. You could stand inside and see yourself reflected in infinitude in all dimensions – a real display of interdiffusion of all particulars. I thoroughly enjoyed it, but he was disappointed at my lack of depth in the experience; and led us off to see the elephant. To see Roshi looking with the whole of his being at elephant, and elephant gazing back, looking with the whole of his being at Roshi, was quite something another form of interdiffusion.

Next day, Roshi was going on the begging round with the monks. A Ryutakuji family who lived some distance away would offer him a meal. ‘You come too. Meet me there.’ I was to take the bus to Mishima, the train to somewhere called Hara and then make my way to a certain street. ‘Don’t know number,’ said he cheerfully.

On the way I felt very unsure – ‘I don’t even know the name of the family. Do I knock at each door? Roshi is often late. They may not be expecting me.’ I tried to think of enough Japanese to ask a polite question. Oh dear, why do I always worry? Why haven’t I learnt by now that when Soen Roshi is around, things happen RIGHT? He is that kind of person. As I turned the corner of a street containing many large houses, one window was open. And through the sounds of Japanese street life came the strains of Elgar’s Cockayne!

Such a courteous way to welcome an English guest! Roshi had already arrived. This was a beautiful and traditional house. The niche or tokonoma in each room contained lovely things. As I took in my surroundings and looked more carefully, I noticed that on the hanging scroll was a picture of a peacock. The porcelain figure underneath it was a peacock. In another room there was a book open at the picture of a peacock, and a peacock-feather fan.

Such a subtle way of welcoming Roshi – someone had heard of our previous day’s adventure. For me, this was an especially delightful visit because the daughter spoke English. Her marriage had been arranged and would soon take place. ‘Wouldn’t you rather choose someone for yourself?’ I asked. She looked horrified. ‘How could I know who would be suitable?’

Two hours later I was sorry to leave, but Roshi was off, setting a really fast pace. ‘This IMPORTANT part of visit,’ said he.

Mile after mile, along a railway track, across country. Eventually a temple. ‘Is Hakuin Zenji’s Temple, Shoin-ji.’ He had brought me to be personally introduced to Hakuin, our seventeenth-century founder.
After seeing round the temple, we went to the cemetery, had a special ceremony at Hakuin’s grave and walked three times round it, chanting. Then he picked up a pebble from the grave and gave it to me as a memento. Now I really felt like a member of the family.

Once there was to be a special feast offered to the monastery, in gratitude. On our morning walk in the mountains I asked about it.

Many years ago Sekiren, a girl of about eighteen had a mental breakdown. The doctors wanted to put her into an asylum. The parents were distraught and brought her to Gempo Roshi, hoping he could do something. The girl herself was in a very distressed and hysterical state, terrified at the thought of the asylum. Gempo Roshi talked to her gently, and held a ceremony to put her under the special protection of Jizo. It was a very grand and impressive ceremony, so that she would be absolutely certain she was under Jizo’s protection. Jizo is a very kind bodhisattva who especially loves children and simple people.

Then he explained to her that she must draw the picture of Jizo a hundred times a day. She must ALWAYS do this. They might not be very good pictures, and they could be quite small, but she MUST do a hundred a day, because Jizo would always be looking after her.

Also, whenever she felt frightened or upset, she must quietly go to her room and draw pictures of Jizo until she felt better.

Through the years at every anniversary of the ceremony, her family gave a feast to the monks in gratitude, and the girl gave all her pictures of Jizo to his big statue in the temple. Years later, she was quite sane and normal, but was still drawing a hundred pictures a day. Now there was an extra-special celebration, because she had made the one-millionth picture, in the form of a large scroll to hang in Jizo’s shrine Room.

Roshi said reflectively as we picked our way along the mountain path, ‘All those thousands of pictures, all those years. We didn’t really know what to do with them. Gempo Roshi once sent me to Los Angeles to help the roshi there. I chanted ceremony on deck each day at noon, and I used to scatter pictures of Jizo on the waves. One day, the captain told me, ‘Today at noon we shall be half-way between Japan and America.’ A lay-group had given me a statue of the baby Buddha as a goodbye gift, the baby standing with one arm pointing up and the other down. Jizo – I went and brought him from my cabin; and at noon, I scattered many pictures of Jizo, and then I dropped baby Buddha into the waves. He still standing there, halfway between Japan and America with his finger pointing straight up. That is why it is called the Pacific Ocean. That is end of story.’

You understand that the stories I am telling you are only the outside of things. The inner core was always the koan training, and zazen, the
meditation. A koan, as you know by now, is an unsolvable riddle, guaranteed to break down one’s relative and logical thinking, and to allow a flash of insight or Enlightenment to break through. An answer must be presented, but probably not in words. The koan was sometimes so much strain as to be almost unendurable. Once, I remember, I was extremely near breakdown point.

It was during a sesshin week. Being always right at the end of the long file of monks waiting for sanzen interview, I was often kneeling formally on that hard ribbed matting for an hour before my turn came. Occasionally someone was in sanzen for 20 minutes, but usually we were in and out much faster.

When the little handbell tinkles from Roshi’s room, the next person strikes the gong twice before going up. All of us in the line have a pretty good idea of the state of each person’s mind by the way the gong sounds, and Roshi in his distant room knows precisely. Sometimes, as a person enters, Roshi rings his handbell immediately, and that means instant dismissal – bow and go. After kneeling, waiting for an hour, meditating on one’s koan, hoping to present an acceptable answer, it can be a shattering blow to have that bell ring immediately. But he can tell by one’s bearing and face that the answer is not yet ready; and during sesshin there is no time to waste.

This particular evening, as usual, I was last in line; and it was just before bedtime when I went in. I was well received for once and given a new koan. But the parting shot as I was leaving the room was ‘Bring answer first thing in morning.’

From nine at night till four next morning to solve a koan!

I think I nearly went mad that night – certainly no sleep, certainly miles from any calm and meditative state of mind. Intense struggle and determination, although knowing that will power would get me nowhere, but sesshin is like that. Zen training is a forcing house. You build up a head of steam until you explode right through with it.

Sometimes, in-between, something just happens. Around half past three one morning, Roshi and I were standing under a persimmon tree. My koan was simmering, and something happened. Roshi was pleased; and as always when pleased, he started to chant the Zen Vow, the vow to attain Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. Naturally I joined in.

Shujo muhen seigan do
Bonna mujin seigan dan
Homon muryo seigan gaku
Butsudo mujo seigan jo.

The lines mean:
However innumerable are all beings, we vow to enlighten them all.
However inexhaustible are our delusions, we vow to extinguish them all.
However immeasurable are the Dharma Truths, we vow to master them all.
However endless is the Buddha Way; we vow to follow it.

This always ends with three prostrations. So down we both went, three times flat down into thick mud! This didn’t disturb Roshi in the least. When he was happy, he was happy. ‘We go home and have party. You bring Toby; he will be happy too.’

I went back to my room to collect Toby’s photograph, which was always there to lend me loving support, quickly changed my muddy dress, and reported to Roshi’s room.

He had already put fresh flowers in the niche, and changed the hanging scroll. Four cushions had been placed: one for Roshi’s late teacher, Gempo Roshi; one for Soen Roshi himself; one for Toby’s photograph, and one for me.

We had a very beautiful and moving tea-ceremony with delicious cakes. He whisked thick green tea for me, in a special bowl, which I much admired. Then I made tea for the other three.

Down below, we could hear the early morning-ceremonially chanting of the monks. Here we were, having a party the four of us; two here, one dead, and one the other side of the world and all this before breakfast.

‘Mustn’t forget to say thank you to Founder of Monastery.’

Obediently I whisked another cup of tea; took it down to the founder’s statue, gave him his tea, offered three prostrations in gratitude, and returned.

Now Roshi spoke very gravely to me. He told me to look mindfully at the new scroll he had hung. As I meditated while looking at it, I realized it was the same sign as the one inscribed in the bottom of the teabowl I had admired.

Roshi said, ‘It means yume, dream.’ He inscribed a special box with the date and details, put the teabowl into it, and presented it to me, saying, ‘Writing means “dream”.’ Must never forget. Life is dream. Use bowl and always remember.’

We went down to the refectory for breakfast. He sat down on his ceremonial cushion. I waited outside the door, standing correctly with eyes down and hands folded in front of me until the file of monks appeared.

I slipped into my place at the end of the line, and followed them, kneeling in my usual low position at the 18 inch high table, ready for chanting the breakfast ceremony. I whole-heartedly wished I could sit properly at mealtimes by now. It seemed so stupid not to be able to manage it after three months. Mealtimes are so beautiful, like a slow dance, that it seems dreadful to sit untidily or to do anything to spoil the
pattern that makes us into a unit instead of being disconnected individuals enjoying separate meals.

Often during our early morning walks Roshi would tell me what he had talked about during *teisho* the day before. That term, he was going through the Mumonkan (The Gateless Gate), a collection of koans dating from about the year 700. Today’s koan was Issan and the Bucket. The text reads:

One day, an old monk arrived at a monastery saying, ‘I am to test whether there is a suitable monk here to serve as the new abbot for a very large monastery being built.’

He set a water bucket in the centre of the room and posed this question to the monks: ‘If you cannot call this a water bucket what do you call it?’

The leader of the assembly said, ‘It cannot be called a stump.’

Issan, the cook, kicked the bucket over with his foot and left the room.

‘Ah!’ said the old monk, ‘That is the man.’

‘Of course,’ said Roshi after a pause, ‘that is what is says in the book, but it didn’t really happen like that at all.’

‘How was it?’ I asked.

‘Well, that old monk was really a magic monk and the new monastery had not been built yet. So Issan carried on with his zazen for the next 20 years. But then he thought to himself, ‘If I am to be abbot of a large monastery, what am I doing staying here? I had better go and find it.’

‘So off he went and searched everywhere. At last, he found himself at the top of a very fine mountain. It had a nut tree and a little brook, so he decided this would be a very good place. He sat down and carried on with his zazen for the next 20 years. But then he thought to himself, ‘oh dear, it is supposed to be a very large monastery but there is only one nut tree and the brook is very small. Perhaps this is not the right place.’

‘So Issan started to go down the path but as he walked, lions and tigers started coming out of the trees from each side, and they roared at him. He said to them: ‘‘Well, it’s no use roaring. Just tell me what I am to do. If I must stay here, you may all leave in peace. But if I am to go, you must all lie down so that I can step over you carefully.’’ They all lay down and he went on his way and found a better place with more nut

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2 It would seem that Issan was looking at the bucket as a container which was holding water rigidly. He kicked it, and the water flowed away in its own natural form.

How interesting that we use the same form of words in English thirteen hundred years later. We say ‘He kicked the bucket’ when someone dies and the life flows away.
trees and a river. ‘This would be better for a lot of people,’ thought Issan. ‘I wonder where they all are.’ He sat down and carried on with his zazen for another 20 years, and then … Daw-san came.’

The Last Sesshin

I was very keyed up for my last sesshin. How I hoped that I should break through my next koan. Goodness knows, Roshi had tried hard enough to prepare me, yet however good the teacher, he can but point the way. I remembered the girl who had one last chance and must then wait till she was 60 years old.

The day beforehand, I was called to Roshi’s room and discovered the farmer whose cow had calved a few weeks before. He was holding a container of milk, and Roshi said in a very dubious tone of voice ‘You must be strong for sesshin. As milk makes English people strong, farmer will bring milk for you each day during sesshin week. You drink each morning. Drink now.’

I remembered what the barn had looked like, but obediently drank the milk, thanked Roshi and the farmer, and sent thoughts of gratitude to the filthy cow!

That evening an American visitor turned up at the gate. The monk in charge could not understand him, so I was sent for as interpreter. It was a young man named David who had just finished university and was taking a year off to see the world before settling down. He carried with him his flute. He explained that he was not a Buddhist but someone had told him that Ryutakuji was a very pleasant place to stay!

I explained to him that this was not a hotel we were on the eve of a very stiff training session, harder than any examination period he had ever experienced, and that there was a strict silence rule. I also told him that of course he could stay the night, the monks would not turn him away at dusk, but for anything else he would have to ask the abbot himself. He said, ‘May I see him?’ So I took him to Roshi’s room and explained. Roshi said, ‘You may stay here as long as you behave exactly like everybody else.’

I showed him to a small dormitory for the Japanese laymen who had come for the sesshin, and told him that whatever they did, he should do exactly the same, and that wherever they went, he should follow on at the end of the line.

After a good deal of meditation, which he had never experienced before, he was getting near his limit. I sent him in to Roshi at the end of the sanzen line.

He said, ‘I can’t do nothing for all those hours. What am I to do while everyone else is sitting still?’ Roshi replied, ‘You must play invisible flute.’
He managed a little better after that, but kept coming to ask me to explain things. And by the end of the third day, he was in tears on my shoulder. 'If this is what the world is like, I want to go home!' I soothed him. 'Only a week altogether. It is worth finishing for one who has managed so far.'

It made things difficult as I needed silence for my own meditation, but there was nothing else to do. Naturally no monk would reprimand me because he knew I thought it necessary to break silence when helping someone whom Roshi had accepted. However, I had an unsuccessful sesshin and was naturally in a very poor mental state afterwards. I was not yet in a state to function efficiently on my koan while dealing with everyday affairs. To be able to operate in both realms is essential. One is, after all, seeking to look into the essence of mind, rather than to look at all the objects of mind that come and go all day long (and all night too).

Nevertheless, there was a resultant benefit. The day after it was all over, I was making tea, and Roshi asked, 'Where is David?' I went outside to look for him, and there he was, sitting under a tree, solid as a rock. I said, 'Roshi says, "Where is David?"' Without stirring, he replied, 'Tell him "David is here."' When I returned with this message, Roshi simply replied ‘Ah, is that how it is.’

When I left a few days later, David was still living there.

End of term was approaching. Trying to maintain ‘Life is dream’ awareness, I wondered how it would be, leaving this rarefied special atmosphere I loved so much. London? I remembered the words of a Zen master who lived somewhere around the year 600.

‘Living is like being in a dream. 
It’s very noisy in the dream.’

The cook, one of the three chief monks I had dreaded so much in the beginning, beckoned me into the kitchen, an area with a strict silence rule. He spoke in Japanese, but slowly, so that I should understand. ‘You go tomorrow morning, Daw-san? I make special rice for breakfast with red beans in it. Red beans very auspicious, and every grain of rice will be saying goodbye to you.’ I bowed deeply.

He asked, ‘How you go?’

‘From Tokyo, I shall fly over the North Pole to London.’

‘The North Pole! What is that like?’

I misquoted a Zen saying: ‘When the polar bear coughs at the North Pole, all monks here in the monastery give a loud sneeze –”Ah Tishoo!”’

He laughed so much, that some ten monks came tumbling in to see what was going on. That kitchen silence rule was more than broken it was shattered.
I went to say a formal goodbye to the chief monk of discipline. That monk, who had been beating me with the stick during the sesshin to spur me on, had carved me a lovely bamboo vase in his spare time – and there is not much spare time for a chief monk in a Zen monastery. I was deeply touched by this going away gift.

Get-up bell last morning, early-morning ceremony, meditation; tail place, tagging on at end of line of monks filing in to breakfast.

Suddenly, ‘No, Daw-san, You sit here.’ At the head of the table, instead of four ceremonial cushions for Roshi and three chief monks, there were five cushions. I was to sit in the place of honour next to Roshi for breakfast! And there were red beans in the rice! It was a special send-off in my honour. At the end of breakfast, Roshi made a long formal speech about me. Goodness knows what he said. But I expect it was something to the effect that, if even a Western woman could come and work hard at Zen, they should all be ashamed not to work much harder and get through koan QUICK!

Anyway, certainly every grain of rice was saying goodbye, and every monk too. They had all learned by heart a little English phrase: ‘Bye, Daw-san, Back soon.’

Could things have changed so much in three-and-a-half months?

I found, to my amazement, that the Cook Chief Monk had been deputed to escort me all the way to Tokyo and see me off at the airport.

When the time came to leave, I found that a little procession had formed, and we walked in state all the way through the monastery grounds. First Roshi and I, with two attendant monks holding ceremonial sunshades over us. Next the monk who would escort me to Tokyo. Then two monks carrying my luggage. And last, a group of monks who had nothing else to do at the moment, but thought it would be pleasant to see me off.

The monks cleaning the courtyard waved ‘Bye, Daw-san, back soon.’ The monks working in the kitchen garden called out ‘Bye Daw-san, back soon.’ Even monks working in distant fields bellowed ‘Bye, Daw-san, back soon.’

Such a calling out could be heard everywhere; and, as we passed the bath-house, four monks rushed out, dripping wet and, stark naked, waving frantically – ‘Bye, Daw-san, Back soon.’

As we reached the temple gate, Roshi and I said a formal goodbye. He thanked me for coming – HE thanked ME! There was the first and last physical contact as he banged my forehead three times with his own, and we moved on, down the hillside path, down the stone steps flanked by rhododendrons and big butterflies, down to the road where the taxi was waiting, and back to England.
When Muriel Daw, first encountered the word Zen in 1961 and didn’t know what it meant, she went to her local library and discovered two names associated with it – Christmas Humphreys and D.T. Suzuki. She telephoned the Buddhist Society which was closed, but there was a vacancy at the Buddhist Society Summer School, there she met both Christmas Humphreys and D.T. Suzuki! She has been a member ever since.

Muriel is a former Editor of *The Middle Way.*

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**ZEN SUNDAYS**

11 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

These classes are run by senior members of the Zen Group and are open to all, but are designed for those unable to attend during the week, allowing them to engage fully in the Zen training programme. There will be an opportunity to have a personal talk with an experienced teacher. Please arrive ten minutes before start and bring sandwiches for lunch. Tea and biscuits will be served.

**Dates in 2015:** 26 April, 31 May, 28 June, 26 July, 27 September, 25 October, and 22 November.

**Pure Land Class on Sundays**

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Professor Kemmyo Taira Sato, Director of Three Wheels, continues to hold meetings to read and discuss *The Great Castle Rajagriha,* a modern Japanese Pure Land book written by Reion Takehara based on *The Meditation Sutra* and *The Nirvana Sutra.* Participants in the class will be provided with Professor Sato’s English translation of the text. **Dates in 2015:** 17 May, 19 July, 13 September.

At The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH  tel: 020 7834 5858

Writing about American composer John Cage in 1971, a music critic observed ‘Evidently, modern life is too much for some young people who take to Cage as they take to drugs’. Deeply unimpressed by Cage sitting at a piano in silence, and offering that silence as a performance, his final judgment was that ‘Cage represents a religious, rather than a musical, movement. He is a professed Zen-Buddhist.’

Dripping with disapproval (that ‘professed’ might as well be ‘self-confessed’), our critic’s account isn’t entirely wrong. As Cage put it, more engagingly: ‘What I do, I do not wish blamed on Zen, though without my engagement with Zen (attendance at lectures by Alan Watts and D. T. Suzuki, reading of the literature) I doubt whether I would have done what I have done.’ Once controversial, Cage is now securely up there with Warhol and Rothko in the American cultural pantheon, and his transition from minor modern composer to major avant-gardist seems to be a direct consequence of his exposure to America’s early wave of Zen around 1950.

This is the aspect art critic Kay Larsen – herself a Buddhist – focuses on in this inexhaustibly interesting ragbag of a book, which is not a biography but a loosely structured, broadly chronological account of Cage’s Buddhist development through the late 1940s and 1950s. It falls into three three parts – Mountains Are Mountains; Mountains Are No Longer Mountains; Mountains Are Again Mountains – from Suzuki’s account of studying Zen: before you study Zen, men are men and mountains are mountains. When you study, things become confused. Then, after studying, men are men and mountains are mountains again. And the difference, after all that? ‘No difference’, says Suzuki (quoted here in Cage’s re-telling), ‘Only the feet are a little bit off the ground.’

Cage was already an atonal composer whose particular innovation was to ‘prepare’ a piano by placing objects on the strings: this detuned it and gave the music a percussion quality, like a slow gamelan. Then around the late 1940s he underwent a personal and professional crisis, but instead of turning to psychoanalysis he turned to Eastern philosophy, particularly the work of Suzuki; the outcome was a happily impersonal mode of composition that removed the ego and the deliberations of choice, and instead favoured chance processes – notably, in Cage’s case, the I Ching. He had turned away from art as self-expression, and seems to have enjoyed the results almost as innocently as his audience. This approach went with a renewed enjoyment of ordinary existence, waking up ‘to the very life we’re living, which is so excellent once one gets one’s mind and one’s desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord.’

The other breakthrough came with a new appreciation of silence: in 1952, in an anechoic chamber at Harvard, he discovered there was no such thing as pure silence – he could hear his blood, and an inner sound that the assistant told him was the firing of neurons. The upshot was 4’33”, a composition for four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence at the piano – or in practice, four minutes and thirty-three seconds of ambient noise and audience fidgeting. This was received
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with Emperor’s New Clothes outrage, as if it was a stunt or a joke, but it was a serious attempt to take silence, focused by the frame of a piano recital, as one might take tea in a tea ceremony.

Cage loved ordinary sounds, but the larger point of 4'33" is not merely sonic – ‘silence is not acoustic’, as he put it, ‘it is a change of mind, a turning around.’ This meditative quality is borne out by the fact that Cage listened to 4'33" daily, and came to consider it a major source of pleasure in his life. One of Cage’s more koan-like questions might be taken as an oblique comment on 4'33": ‘Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school?’ Cage wore his Zen lightly, but Larsen does a good job of detailing his major influences. These include Suzuki on the ego, the Heart Sutra (reproduced as an appendix to this book), Huang Po’s Doctrine of Universal Mind, and a less well-known 1955 book of negative theology by L. C. Beckett, Neti Neti (from the Sanskrit ‘not this, not that’).

These influences came out not only in his music but his lectures, notably his Lecture on Something and Lecture on Nothing. The Gertrude Stein-ish cadences of the latter are a performance in their own right: ‘I have nothing to say and I am saying it and that is poetry as I need it’; ‘More and more I have the feeling that we are getting nowhere. Slowly, as the talk goes on, we are getting nowhere and that is a pleasure.’

This is a very reverent and rather America-centric book, and Larsen arguably over-estimates Cage’s importance in relation to Marcel Duchamp, the French conceptual artist who first questioned what art was, and whether anything could be art (she believes Duchamp would not have been fully appreciated without Cage). It also lacks narrative drive and has a certain crassness of style, so Meister Eckhart becomes ‘the maverick Christian priest’ and Suzuki ‘the Hobbit-sized Japanese scholar’. But it is still packed with interest (especially if you don’t expect too much, don’t keep judging, and don’t will yourself onwards too hard), sometimes almost incidental. How many of us knew that Duchamp’s art-world-shattering urinal, Fountain (1917), attracted the early label ‘Buddha of the Bathroom’? (from its shape, which has also been compared to the Virgin Mary). Cage’s quotes are a pleasure and an illumination, whether he is talking about music or mushrooms (he was a founder of the New York Mycological Society). He says at one point that mushrooms taught him about Zen, although he disclaims having favourites – ‘I like the ones I have – if you like the ones you don’t have, you’re not so happy.’ It is also extremely interesting as an introduction to 4'33", a work that repays thought. It is not about heroic composing but sacramental listening, and we might even say that when we listen to silence we listen to consciousness. In other words it is less about a quality of making than a quality of attention: another illustration of the great Tibetan proverb – so nearly cynical, but profoundly not – ‘When there is veneration, even a dog’s tooth emits light.’

PHIL BAKER

This is a beautifully illustrated biography of the great twentieth century Swiss psychiatrist whom most readers will have heard about, and many will be
familiar with his important and groundbreaking discoveries on the Heart/Mind. It is an overview of his life, work and achievements. It generously abounds in colourful illustrations of art from all over the world, showing the universality of time and place of the Great Matter. Paintings and sculpture adorn virtually every other page, bringing to light the ideas conveyed in the text and pointing to those things which cannot be expressed in words and concepts.

Jung for me was someone I read about in a Jungian primer as a boy. It was a rather sketchy introduction, but I felt that he was a benevolent guide and I trusted him for that. I heard and read of concepts such as the introvert/extrovert personality types, the animus and anima archetypes, and synchronicity and so on. I also remember him introducing in Memories, Dreams, Reflections his ideas on the Mandala and the individuation Quest. So I credit him for setting me on a journey of self-discovery at this important stage of adolescence.

But there were things that could not be studied in books and grasped just intellectually. Once the ball was set in motion, there could be no turning back no matter where the journey would take me. I went to university and studied poetry and the humanities, but it soon reached an impasse. I suffered a nervous breakdown and couldn’t finish my degree at the time, and so had to spend a year in a mental hospital. So this is not such a bad thing as one might suppose. I realize now the importance of this experience, ‘it is all grist to the mill’.

Luckily, I met a psychiatrist, Dr Michel A. Woodbury, weekly, for over ten years, so there were affinity links there with him and his wife, Margarita, also a psychiatrist. We did dream analysis, where one wrote down one’s dreams every morning upon waking, psycho-drama therapy in a group, and I was taking anti-psychotic medicines to treat anxiety and hallucinations both auditory and visual. He was not a so-called Jungian analyst, but he slowly nurtured my spirit and recovery. I could begin to heal the Heart from its sickness.

I have been asked to mention Jung’s relationship with Buddhism. I would like to mention some very good pieces by him on the subject: his psychological preface to W Y Evans-Wentz’s translation of The Great Liberation through Listening, also known as The Tibetan Book of the Dead, and Jung and the East, a collection of writings on the Great Matter, edited by J. J. Clarke. Jung often described himself as the ‘conflicting of the opposites’. He was well acquainted with Zen, especially towards the end of his life, when he read ancient Chinese Chan masters, and felt that the only difference between his ideas and theirs was in the words. Basically they were describing the same thing. He would often meditate on the Bodhidharma rupa. And in his simple rustic solitude at his Swiss cottage of Bollingen, he practised stone carving, gardening, and the Zen way of ‘carrying water and chopping wood’. As a medical doctor he exemplified the role of a medicine Buddha, one whose role is to heal the ills of the world with the Dharma as medicine, remedies particular to each, according to their need.

Basically, Jung was very adept at explaining to the European and Western academics and laypersons the subtleties of the so-called ‘Eastern philosophies’. That the West could understand and grasp it was another matter entirely. Basically, I think Jung was saying that our culture is schizophrenic. This is due to the fact that our shadow archetype, the dark and terrible aspect of our being
that we would rather not acknowledge, but fear, is pushed aside and buried in the collective unconscious. So this energy, which the first law of thermodynamics in physics states can neither be created nor destroyed, erupts uncontrollably from the Self. So we have these great ideological and religious wars, genocide, tyrants and tragic catastrophes. Jung was primarily a religious man, who wanted to show the Way of Alchemy, where base metal is transmuted into gold, the highest substance. The divinity in the realized man had to be acknowledged as having a non-dual aspect of being simultaneously terrible, primal, wrathful in aspect and also rational, clear and ordered. So the balance of ying/yang is restored, never static. Our light side and our darkest exist in relationship with each other. I would like to end this book review with a short quote by Jean Houston, found in the introduction:

In his own life he was, in many ways, a prototype of the human being still being forged in our own time, an archetype of the emerging possible human that I observe struggling into being all over the world. That Jung’s work is a vital bridge linking East and West to each other as well as to the North-South shamanic axis contributes immeasurably to this evolutionary development. In this regard he was one of the first to show how many members of European-derived cultures reveling in technique and objective mastery are sadly lacking in a spiritual awareness and subjective complexity found in aboriginal and indigenous cultures belonging to other stages of historical development.

JOHN ANDERS ROBINSON

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BOOKS RECEIVED


Takuan Soho (1573–1645) is one of the greatest swordmasters ever and he is also famous as a Zen master. His two works on Zen and swordsmanship are essential reading and among the most straightforward and lively presentations of Zen ever written. Although dealing ostensibly with the art of the sword, Record of Immovable Wisdom and the Sword Tale are basic guides to Zen – how to manifest the Zen mind/heart not only in sword play but from moment to moment in everyday life. Of course in the heat of battle, fear of death has to be overcome and thus many consider this almost Samurai/military Zen the most superior form as it has such an immediacy, there is no comfort zone here whatsoever.


Cross-cultural study of the multifaceted relations between Buddhism, its materiality and instances of religious violence and destruction in East Asia, which remains a vast and still largely unexplored field of inquiry. Material objects are important not just for Buddhism practice, but also for the conceptualization of Buddhist doctrines; yet, Buddhism developed ambivalent attitudes towards such need for objects, and an awareness that even the most sacred objects could be destroyed.)
BOOK REVIEWS


Buddhism and Childhood studies. Written by leading scholars, the nineteen articles explore ideas about childhood, and textual representations of children, together with the actual lives of children throughout the history and diversity of Buddhism traditions.


Susan Stabile draws a dual perspective to explore the value of interreligious dialogue, the essential spiritual dynamics that operate across faith traditions, and the fruitful ways Buddhist meditation practices can deepen Christian prayer.


The book teaches that the development of wisdom is not an easy task. The truth of things is elusive, subtle and can even be frightening, and to approach it we need to develop a less literal and more reflecting intelligence, as well as greater maturity and courage. But despite the challenges, learning to live wisely is ultimately the most satisfying of all human endeavours.


‘Genuine compassion is based not on our own projections and expectations but rather on the right of the other; irrespective of whether another person is a close friend or an enemy, as long as that person wishes for peace and happiness and wishes to overcome suffering, then on that basis we develop a genuine concern for his or her problems. If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion’ – His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

REFLECTIONS OF A ZEN BUDDHIST NUN, by Kim Iryop (Author) and Jin Y Park (Translator), Korean Classics Library, University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014, ISBN 978 0 824 83878 2, pp.328, £37.95, hardcover.

The author challenges her readers through her creative interpretations of Buddhist doctrines and Buddhist worldview, her reflections on the meaning of Buddhist practice, and her capacity to put together diverse aspects of human existence. In this process, the reader will also get a new insight into modern Korean literature which has been dominated by patriarchal reading and a new vision of the Korean New Women whose ideas and contributions to Korean society and intellectual world have long been in the shadow, silenced in the name of modernization and nation-building.

The Life and Work of Kim Iryop (1896–1971) bear witness to Korea’s encounter with modernity. A prolific writer, Iryop reflected on identity and existential loneliness in her poems, short stories, and autobiographical essays. As a pioneering feminist intellectual, she dedicated herself to gender issues and understanding the changing role of women in Korean society. As an influential Buddhist nun, she examined religious teachings and strove to interpret modern human existence through a religious worldview.

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Courses in London 2015

A warm invitation is extended to Buddhists interested in chaplaincy work within a wide variety of areas. The aim of these training groups is to explore and share experiences that help develop skills, competencies and capabilities in offering and providing spiritual and religious support.

During 2015 a series of seven one-day meetings, held in London.
Complete beginners to chaplaincy are most welcome.

Buddhist Chaplaincy Support Group: Kalyana Mitra Chaplaincy Training
Non-residential option: seven Sunday or Friday meetings

Session 1: Spiritual Assessment and Intervention (9.2.1)
London: Sunday 12 April
• He gives what is difficult to give (duddadam dadāti)

Session 2: Religious Assessment and Intervention (9.2.2)
London: Sunday 10 May
• He does what is difficult to do (dukkaram karoti)

Session 3: Practicing Ethically (9.1.2)
London: Sunday 7 June
• He patiently endures what is difficult to endure (dukkhamam khamati)

Session 4: Communication Skills (9.1.3)
London: Sunday 5 July
• He reveals his own secrets (guyha-massa avikaroti)

Session 5: Team Working (9.3.1)
London: Sunday 6 September
• He keeps one’s secrets (guyha-massa pariguyhati)

Session 6: Reflective Practice (9.4.1)
London: Sunday 4 October
• He does not abandon one in misfortune (āpadāsu na-jahati)

Session 7: Personal Spiritual Development (9.4.2)
London: Sunday 1 November
• He does not despise one because of one’s loss (khinena na-atimaññati)

Venues: The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, Victoria, London SW1V 1PH
Times: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Costs: The programme (including Buddhist Society membership) costs £190 to London residents and £180 to those living outside of London. The cost to those who are already members of the Buddhist Society is £150.

Refreshments are provided, please bring along vegetarian food to share for lunch
Please feel free to telephone with any questions to
Hogetsu Baerndal 07533 332776 or Keith Munnings 07931 532006
If you wish to attend one of these groups please apply to
hogetsu@baerndal.eu or keith@eskola.co.uk

These courses will cover material relevant to the accreditation of Buddhist Chaplains, including in-depth work on the ‘Seven Qualities of a Friend’, Mitta sutta (AN VII 35). The training themes are taken from the ‘Developing a Healthcare Chaplains’ Capabilities and Competencies’ document produced by South East Strategic Health Authority. These themes are selected for their relevance to all areas of Buddhist Chaplaincy.

Please note: attendance at this programme does not guarantee endorsement as a chaplain, but the training may be used as part of an application for endorsement. Bursaries are available for people who are already involved in chaplaincy related work and are on low income.
Burt Taylor (Herbert Alec Taylor) was born 21 May 1924 in Vancouver, Canada and passed away 27 October 2014, his partner and all his relatives having predeceased him.

He was cremated at the Mendip crematorium on the 12 November 2014. Half the ashes have been scattered in his wonderful garden in Pilton, Somerset, and the other half in Chithurst Buddhist Monastery.

Burt Taylor was a familiar and friendly face for those joining the Buddhist Society and it was Christmas Humphreys who encouraged him to become General Secretary of the Buddhist Society in 1972 where he played an active role. He also ran the Thursday meditation class at the Society for many years and ran and organized the Buddhist Society Summer School. Burt had a special interest in and was a master of Ikebana and he gave classes at the Summer School at High Leigh.

Burt was also a very close friend to the late Venerable Myokyo-ni known at the time as Irmgard Schloegl. He worked alongside Christmas Humphreys in helping her to establish the group’s Zen class at the Buddhist Society and ran it for some years while she completed her training in Japan.

Burt will be greatly missed: he was an entertaining story teller at the Summer Schools with a very risqué sense of humour. But at the same time he had great compassion with a very deep understanding of the Dhamma.
BUDDHA DAY MEETING

Saturday 16 May
BUDDHA DAY PROGRAMME

11 a.m. Welcome and a talk entitled ‘What is Buddha’ by Venerable Myokun of Shobo-an Zen Centre

12.15 p.m. Lunch (tea and coffee available, please bring sandwiches)

1.15 p.m. – 2.15 p.m. Meditation/Open Period Library will be open.

3 p.m. Puja and Dharma Talk by The Venerable Seelawimala Chief Sangha Nayake of Great Britain and Head of The London Buddhist Vihara

4 p.m. Followed by a Reception and light refreshments. (an opportunity to meet the guests speakers.)

Everyone is welcome throughout the day.

The Buddhist Society 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH (Victoria Station 5 mins walk) www.thebuddhistociety.org
Tel: 020 7834 5858
A Week of Samatha Practice

There have been meditation practices around for thousands of years and some of these were used and developed by the Buddha, who lived in northern India over 2,500 years ago. In particular, he advocated the use of breathing mindfulness as a technique that is suitable for most people and which, when cultivated and developed, is of great benefit. It helps to bring about both calm (samatha) and insight (vipassana) which, when combined together, bring about greater happiness and freedom and, ultimately, liberation.

In this school of Samatha practice, the emphasis is primarily on developing ever deeper states of calm through mindfulness of breathing so that insight might arise naturally. However, both calm and insight come into play and either may take precedence at any given time. So, in order to assist the development of the practice, meditators regularly report to a meditation teacher who can offer individual guidance.

Alongside the practice of breathing mindfulness, meditators may also be encouraged to pursue other areas of development. These might include such things as walking practice, mindful work, physical activities, study and group discussion.

Samatha is a living tradition based on ancient teachings and is open to anyone. If you are interested in learning this practice, we are offering an introductory week at the Samatha Centre, Greenstreete in mid-Wales. To apply, please contact samathaweek@samatha.org in order to arrange an initial meeting with a Samatha teacher. The course will be run by Tom Lockhart, Keith Munnings and Rosie Rose. The course runs from Sunday 10th May to Sunday 17th May and the costs for the week will be £200, with a reduced rate of £100 for anyone unwaged.

Weekend Courses for those who are new to Samatha practice are also available. For details see: www.samatha.org/courses
Courses Open to the Public

Introduction to Buddhism

Tuesdays at 6.30 p.m.

An integrated course of seven consecutive talks designed to acquaint the newcomer with the basic fundamentals of Buddhism. Each talk is designed to give an introduction to the study of the theory and practice of Buddhist teachings.

The Buddhist Society considers the Introduction to Buddhism course to be of special importance as it forms the foundation for its structured programme. In this context, those who have attended this course are encouraged to continue their studies by attending the First Steps in Buddhist Practice or the First Turning of the Wheel Courses.

Those wishing to attend must do so from the opening talk.

Courses begin: 3 March, 26 May, 8 September.

At The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH
tel: 020 7834 5858

The Buddhist Society’s Ninetieth Anniversary Appeal

Each decade of the Society’s life has required some investment in the fabric of its home. That time has once again come around for the Society to appeal to its members for donations in order to give our home that much needed facelift.

Refurbishment will require work including, plumbing, plastering painting, carpentry, lighting and carpeting.

Please send Donations to: The Treasurer,
The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH
NOTICES

A Part-Time Position at The Buddhist Society

The Buddhist Society requires a Part-Time Co-Administrator and Librarian to assist our Staff.

Please apply to the Registrar for job description
The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH

Notice of Forthcoming Public Lectures

How to be Happy: A Buddhist and An Economist Debate
by Colin Ash Wednesday 25 March 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

The ‘dismal science’ of economics is getting happy. Policy makers increasingly look to economists’ research on the causes of subjective well-being (happiness) when designing appropriate measures. The emphasis of this research and these policies is on external conditions which might improve well-being.

The Buddhist approach is different. The Buddhist agenda can be summed up in two words: stop suffering. Dependent origination gives a generic account of why we suffer. Buddhist meditation practice provides internal strategies for overcoming suffering. Happiness in the usual sense is not the ultimate goal of Buddhism; the cessation of suffering is. Are these two approaches compatible?

The Importance of Silence
by Aloka David Smith Wednesday 1 April at 6.30 p.m.

In whatever tradition it comes from, the central aspiration of Dharma practice is to discover stillness and silence of mind. From this point the created world can fall away to discover freedom and the end of suffering.

Not easy to pull this off, but Buddhism offers the tools to cultivate this aspiration through its many practices. Finding the right tools is the challenge, but once found you will soon be on your way to liberation.

Sitting it Out
by Dr Desmond Biddulph Wednesday 27 May at 6.30 p.m.

Coming to Be, Ceasing to Be
CLASSES FOR MEMBERS ONLY

FUNDAMENTALS OF ZEN BUDDHISM  
Mondays at 6.30 p.m.
Led by senior members of the Zen group. Familiarity with the basic principles of Buddhism is expected.

THERAVADA CLASS  
Mondays at 6.30 p.m.
Those attending are encouraged to arrive shortly after 6 p.m. to meet with the teacher and ask questions, etc. The Class is led by senior nuns and delivered by lay teachers from the Amaravati Monastic Community. The main focus of the classes will be an exploration of the Theravada teachings with particular emphasis on their application in daily life. There will be opportunities for formal meditation (with instruction), determining the Five Precepts, and a short talk and/or questions and discussion.

ZEN MEDITATION AND PRACTICE  
Tuesdays & Fridays at 6.30 p.m.
Attendance by invitation following attending the Monday night Fundamentals of Zen Buddhism class.

FIRST TURNING OF THE WHEEL COURSE  
Tuesdays at 6.30 p.m.
This course will acquaint students with some basic Buddhist texts. It is recommended for followers of all traditions and explores the teachings of early Indian Buddhism which are held in common by all Buddhist schools, and which form the foundation of all Buddhist practice. There are eight talks and you must register in advance with the Librarian. Teacher Venerable Myokun. Next Course begins: 12 May, with one week gap 9 June.

BASIC MEDITATION  
Thursdays at 6.30 p.m.
Held in the Lecture Hall at the Society under the guidance of Colin Ash, this class is based on the practice of mindfulness as taught by the Buddha. The class welcomes Visiting Guest Teachers.

FIRST STEPS IN BUDDHIST PRACTICE  
Thursdays at 6.30 p.m.
An experiential six week course aimed at people who have completed ‘Introduction to Buddhism’ and want to start to practice for the first time, based on The Four Foundations of Mindful Awareness. Participants are introduced to practical exercises which they then practice in daily life during the six weeks. Registration is essential, via the Librarian, with a maximum of ten places. Course begins 8 October.
NOTICES

The Buddhist Society

CALENDAR

Spring term 2015 begins Monday 5 January recess: last class of Spring term Friday 27 March 2015

Bank Holiday Closures:
3 April Good Friday
6 April Easter Monday

Summer term 2015 begins Monday 13 April recess: last class of Summer term Friday 24 July

Bank Holiday Closures:
Monday 4 May
Monday 25 May

* For those living in London and within a 50-mile radius

We are closed from Monday 24 August Summer Bank Holiday Monday 31 August
(Summer School 22 to 29 August)

Autumn/Winter term begins Monday 7 September 2015 recess: last class of Autumn/Winter term Friday 11 December

Christmas/New year recess: 24 December and resumes 5 January 2016

* For more details on times, dates and times of classes and term times please see our website:
www.thebuddhistsociety.org

Application for Membership of the Buddhist Society

Membership includes the Society’s journal, The Middle Way.

Friend of The Buddhist Society

Membership £108 p/a (or £9 per month)

Ordinary Individual Joint
Membership (pa) (pa) (pa)
UK metropolitan * £40 £50
UK provincial £25 £35
Full-time student £20 (proof required)
Europe / EEC £25 / £30 £29 / £35
Outside Europe £35 £40

* For those living in London and within a 50-mile radius

Subscription for The Middle Way

Subscription (pa)

UK £20
Europe £25 / £30
Outside Europe £25

All payments should be made in sterling. If foreign currency or drafts are sent, please add the equivalent of £8 to cover bank charges. All cheques to be made payable to the Buddhist Society.

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* For more details on times, dates and times of classes and term times please see our website:
www.thebuddhistsociety.org

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CLASSES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

LUNCHTIME MEDITATIONS  
Mons., Tues., & Thurs. 12.40–1.20 p.m.
Suitable for beginners and seasoned meditators alike. The forty minute session covers a short talk on meditation plus thirty minutes meditation. If required instruction will be given on breathing and posture. Ron Maddox who is an Hon Chaplain at The South London Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust will take the Monday class. Darcy Biddulph will take the Tuesday class. Rohit Shah from the Zen Centre will take the Thursday class.

TIBETAN BUDDHISM CLASS  
Thursdays at 6.30 p.m.
This class is led by Roy Sutherwood, who is a senior student of Geshi Tashi of Jamyang Buddhist Centre. The class looks at the practical significance of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, meditation and practice for daily life. We are exploring the topics in an open, friendly and direct manner, addressing the basic questions that Westerners often have upon first encountering Tibetan Buddhism’s rich, colourful and at times complex imagery and symbolism.

SATURDAY MEDITATION CLASS  
Saturdays at 3 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.
This informal and friendly class meets in the Lecture Hall every Saturday except on the Society’s special days or during periods of closure. This is a general meditation class and welcomes newcomers and older hands alike. Newcomers should arrive 5-10 mins before the class starts to meet the teacher and ask any questions they have about meditation. Instruction on meditation is given if required. There may be a short talk or reading. This class welcomes guest teachers.

ZEN SUNDAYS  
Sundays (ten classes per year) at 11 a.m. – 3.30 p.m.
These classes led by senior members of the Zen Group are open to all, but are designed for those unable to attend during the week, allowing them to engage fully in the Zen training. 22 March, 26 April, 31 May.

PURE LAND CLASS  
Sundays (six classes per year) 1 p.m–3 p.m.
Professor Kemmyo Taira Sato, Director of Three Wheels, continues to hold meetings to read and discuss The Great Castle Rajagriha, a modern Japanese Pure Land book written by Reion Takehara. 15 March, 17 May, 19 July, 13 September.

FOUNDER’S DAY MEETING  
Saturday 25 April
A day beginning at 11 a.m. with a Welcome Talk, and a Founder’s Day Talk at 3 p.m. followed at 4 p.m. by refreshments in the Library.
See page 277 for further details.
How to be Happy: A Buddhist and An Economist Debate
by Colin Ash
Wednesday 25 March 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

The ‘dismal science’ of economics is getting happy. Policy makers increasingly look to economists’ research on the causes of subjective well-being (happiness) when designing appropriate measures. The emphasis of this research and these policies is on external conditions which might improve well-being.

The Buddhist approach is different. The Buddhist agenda can be summed up in two words: stop suffering. Dependent origination gives a generic account of why we suffer. Buddhist meditation practice provides internal strategies for overcoming suffering. Happiness in the usual sense is not the ultimate goal of Buddhism; the cessation of suffering is.

Are these two approaches, the external of economics and internal of the Dhamma, compatible?

Colin Ash is Senior Research Fellow in Economics at the University of Reading. He is a Director of the English Sangha Trust, an Angulimala Buddhist Prison Chaplain, and leads the Thursday Meditation Class at the Buddhist Society.

The Importance of Silence
by Áloka David Smith
Wednesday 1 April at 6.30 p.m.

In whatever tradition it comes from, the central aspiration of Dharma practice is to discover stillness and silence of mind. From this point the created world can fall away to discover freedom and the end of suffering. Not easy to pull this off, but Buddhism offers the tools to cultivate this aspiration through its many practices. Finding the right tools is the challenge, but once found you will soon be on your way to liberation.

Áloka David Smith has been a practicing Buddhist for 40 years. He began training with Zen practising with the Venerable Myokyo-ni a teacher from the Rinzai school, at the Buddhist Society in London. This was his practice for more than five years, before travelling to Sri Lanka in 1980. Here he lived for three years as a Theravada monk, and it was while he was in Sri Lanka that his spiritual breakthrough took place in 1981.

Sitting it out
by Dr Desmond Biddulph
Wednesday 27 May at 6.30 p.m.

Coming to Be, Ceasing to Be.
The Buddhist Society

Founded in 1924 by Christmas Humphreys, it is one of the oldest Buddhist societies in Europe.

*The object of the Society is to publish and make known the principles of Buddhism and to encourage the study and practice of those principles.*

The Society presents the major Buddhist schools and traditions, and in its extensive library there are books on all Buddhist subjects.

The Society holds lectures, classes, courses and activities in the Theravada, Zen, Pure Land and Tibetan traditions. Some are open to the public, including Introducing Buddhism, which offers the newcomer an introduction to the whole field of Buddhism. There are also classes and lectures for members only, these include; First Steps in Buddhist Practice, The First Turning of the Wheel Course that explores the teachings of early Indian Buddhism, and the Great Way Course is on Indian Mahayana themes. We also hold an Annual Summer School entitled ‘Deeper into Buddhism’.

**Membership includes:**

- a subscription to the Society’s quarterly journal, *The Middle Way*
- free admittance to all lectures, classes and courses
- library borrowing rights *(postal service available)*