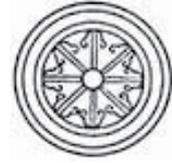




# Three Wheels NEWS



London Shogyoji Trust

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Number 10

## Visit of His Eminence the Supreme Primate Koken Otani to Three Wheels.

At this Eza we received the great honour and privilege of welcoming His Eminence Koken Otani the Supreme Primate of our tradition, and his younger brother, the Venerable Noshō-in Shoji Otani. His Eminence's special visit to Three Wheels is part of his Teaching Pilgrimage to visit Dharma-friends in Shin Buddhist temples of the tradition. This pilgrimage is an important part of the spiritual preparations for the 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founder of the Tradition Shinran Shonin in the year 2011. After weeks of organising and planning at Three Wheels we were able to participate in this great event. Also attending was Reverend Keimei Takehara from Shogyoji Temple in Japan in order to join in this major spiritual event at Three Wheels and provide invaluable assistance in welcoming the Supreme Primate.

The Eza began with a service to the Buddha in which Venerable Noshō-in Otani lead us in the chanting of the Shoshinge and Wasan, Venerable Noshō-in then gave a Dharma talk, the first one he has ever given in English. Venerable Noshō-in stated how on welcoming the 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Shinran Shonin he would like as many people in the world as possible to gain a greater understanding of the Dharma and deepen even further the foundations of their faith. Using an example from the popular children's novel *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Venerable Noshō-in discussed the way the world around us can be said to be a projection of our own minds. He described how through experiencing the suffering and hardships inherent in living in this world there appears within us the faith to entrust ourselves entirely to Amida Buddha. Through this faith all that seemed to be wholly bad is transformed by Other-Power into something virtuous that steers us to a better direction in life. He concluded by pronouncing by inviting us to pronounce the nembutsu together with him.

The next part of the Eza began with the entrance of His Eminence the Supreme Primate into the Buddha-

room. Before His Eminence, one of his attendants in the time-honoured ceremonial style, read out his teaching letter written to all followers of the tradition known as the *Goshoku*, with Reverend Sato reading out the English translation. Reverend Sato informed us of the long tradition behind these letters which date back to Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin.



His Eminence the Supreme Primate Koken Otani

His Eminence then delivered a deeply interesting and illuminating Dharma talk. He discussed the great significance of the 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Shinran Shonin to all Shin Buddhist followers. It provides them with an opportunity to experience for themselves the spiritual excitement of the time in which their school was first established and the religious spirituality of Shinran Shonin himself. His Eminence said in this regard that he would like to 'encourage us to encounter and truly feel the mind of the Buddha'. His Eminence then talked in depth about the meaning of interdependent origination (Japanese: Engi) in Buddhism and the

profound practical meaning this has in our lives. Through realising our interdependency with others we can come to experience how the Buddha works through each individual and come to further understand how the Buddha's great compassion is continually working upon ourselves. His Eminence then looked at the notion of repentance, emphasising how important it is for us to acknowledge the many mistakes in our lives and to have the sincerity to repent of our misdeeds. This, he explained, will lead to our awakening to the fundamental truth about living. We will for the first time truly understand how much other have done for us, how much we have received from those around us, those who make our lives possible. This awakening, His Eminence said, will give birth to a strong sense of gratitude from which we will be impelled to say the nembutsu in response to all that has been done for us.

Next Reverend Sato invited a number of Dharma-friends, including those present who participated in the confirmation ceremony His Eminence presided over in June 2003, to give small talks of thanks to His Eminence and share their impressions of the Eza.

Firstly Mr. Andrew Webb thanked His Eminence for coming once again to Three Wheels for the third time since June 2003 when he graciously officiated in the ceremonies of ordination and confirmation. Andrew described His Eminence's Letter as being a great spiritual light for the Shin Buddhist Samgha in the West and how he felt through reading it a deep connection between the 750<sup>th</sup> memorial anniversary for Shinran Shonin and the unfolding of Amida Buddha's Original Prayer in the world.

Dr. Lucien Chocron expressed his happiness at His Eminence's return visit to London. He described how inspired he was by the confirmation ceremony that occasioned his first visit. Lucien told His Eminence how last year he began work on compiling a Gongyo Book (Shin Buddhist Service book) which could be used by Japanese and English speakers alike, reporting that this was now near completion.

Mrs. Etsuko Crellin spoke of her deep gratitude towards His Eminence for the continuous spiritual support and encouragement he has given towards Three Wheels. She described the work undertaken by the recently formed 'Friends of Three Wheels' to provide practical help and assistance to the running of Three Wheels in many different forms. Mrs. Crellin also spoke movingly of the deep joy with which this

hard work was done.

Ms. Mary Hall thanked his His Eminence and Venerable Noshoin Shoji Otani for the wonderful talks they gave. Mary told His Eminence about how last year she undertook an introspection session at Shogyoji Temple. Mary further said that listening to His Eminence's Dharma talk, she was reminded deeply of her introspection session and the gratitude she felt during it on being awakened to what had been done for her through the kindness of others.

Dr. Wendy Dosset of Lampeter University in Wales shared with His Eminence how truly happy she was to have the privilege of meeting him once again and how moved she was to hear his talk. Dr. Dosset recalled the words of His Eminence's talk in which he talked about the gratitude that one feels on being awakened to all that has been done for us. She was reminded by them of her recent visit to Shogyoji Temple, when, through a question posed by a Dharma-friend, she was occasioned to think deeply about how her opportunity to visit there was made entirely possible through what had been done for her by others.

Next Reverend Sato read out a letter from Mr. Andy Barritt who was unable to attend this time due to his completing his dissertation in Buddhist studies. In his letter Andy shared his memories of the 2003 Confirmation ceremony and the talk his eminence gave on that occasion saying:

"What your words impressed upon me was the connections between the Shin Buddhist teaching of entrusting, and other basic ancient Buddhist principles. In particular you spoke of the important teaching known as the 'four immeasurable minds'; the immeasurable mind of compassion, the immeasurable mind of love, the immeasurable mind of joy, and the immeasurable mind of forsaking all attachment. Recalling the importance of all of these aspects of the Buddhist path has helped me to listen more deeply to the Dharma, and become aware when my path strays too far from the middle way."

Finally Reverend Sato asked Dr. Ann-Marie Crellin to speak. Ann-Marie expressed her gratitude towards his Eminence and his brother for attending Three Wheels and the talks they gave. Ann-Marie also recalled with gratitude the strong influence her discussions with Reverend Sato about the Tannisho had upon her religious life and that how this made her understand how her behaviour, good or bad, influences others. Today's teaching by His Eminence on the philosophy

of interdependence and gratitude, Ann-Marie said, reminded her of this very important point.

At the conclusion of the meeting all of the participants, together with His Eminence the Supreme Primate, Venerable Noshō-in Otani and their party, enjoyed a beautiful buffet meal together. Everyone was then able to have the wonderful opportunity of being able to speak with His Eminence and Venerable Noshō-in who were only too happy to answer questions and listen to people's stories and reflections. All sorts

of topics were discussed including amongst many others, family life, bringing up children, the growth of Buddhism in the west and social concerns. Later we were able to join His Eminence and Venerable Shoji around the table to enjoy tea and more conversation which everybody greatly enjoyed. At the conclusion we gathered in the front garden of Three Wheels to wave goodbye to His Eminence and his party and wish them a safe journey.

**Andrew Webb**



## **A Thai Buddhist Abbot at Three Wheels: Ajahn Sumedho.**

We were very privileged to welcome Ajahn Sumedho as guest speaker of this Eza. Ajahn Sumedho is a bhikku (monk) in the Thai Forest tradition of Theravada Buddhism and abbot of Amaravati, a monastery he established in Britain which was the first in Europe to be open to Westerners. He is the most senior western disciple of his late master Ajahn Chah and one of the foremost Buddhist teachers and leaders in Europe.



**Ajahn Sumedho**

Reverend Sato opened the meeting by expressing his delight in welcoming Ajahn Sumedho and talking about the relationship he and Three Wheels have with him since their first encounter when participating in a

Buddhist Summer school in Leicester. Reverend Sato noted that although the Theravada tradition is 2,500 years old, much older than that of the Jodo Shinshu, and that there are differences in their outward forms, they are one and the same in their essence. Reverend Sato went on to recall how once when he was listening to Ajahn Sumedho talk about inner peace, he felt how Ajahn Sumedho was endowed with a mind of peaceful awareness and that the inner quality of Ajahn Sumedho's mind was the same as his master in Japan. Thus he was very happy to find a truly awakened person here in Britain.

Ajahn Sumedho's dharma-talk was delivered by him spontaneously whilst seated in the posture of meditation. It was full of deep clarity, compassion and sometimes humour as discussed the four Noble Truths of Buddhism and how through applying these teachings to our lives we can awaken to a profound awareness of the true nature of ourselves and the world we live in.

At the beginning of Ajahn Sumedho's talk he responded to Reverend Sato's introduction by emphasising that the whole point of Buddhist teaching is that the full nature of all beings is the same. What Buddhist teaching does is to point at reality rather than define it as reality is boundless and without form.

On discussing the first Noble Truth, that there is suffering, Ajahn Sumedho asked the question of what was noble or true about suffering as suffering is something most people would like to get rid of from

their lives. He carried on by saying that suffering is an inescapable part of all humans and living beings, a part of the very fabric of life. Ajahn Sumedho then described how we try to control everything that happens in our lives with the thought that we know the best way that things should be and how we think that our view of what is right is right for the world. This way of living only creates suffering for ourselves and those around us. There are many ideals that we receive, ideals of what we and others should be, how the country and the world should be run. Yet the sense of self which we hold on to when we think in this way is a created and acquired thing. It is based on an ignorance of how things really are.

Ajahn Sumedho continued by saying that the first Noble Truth offers a way of learning from our suffering. As we start to investigate and understand suffering we begin to see a way from liberating ourselves from it through letting go of its causes and by allowing the conditions to be as they are. We can become aware of this in the ordinary moments of our lives not only in times of exceptional unhappiness. Ajahn Sumedho said in this regard “in the present moment Buddha encourages us to be aware, not just at an extreme moment. We don’t have to sit on top of mountain or find an ideal place. The point of meditation is a willingness to open to the present. Don’t wait until you are champion of the world or at the nadir of despair. To be able to do this

means a certain amount of trusting yourself”.

After Ajahn Sumedho’s talk Reverend Sato invited questions and impressions from the participants. Among them was Reverend Ganshin Roc, a priest in the Tendai tradition of Buddhism who commented that what Ajahn Sumedho’s talk described the fundamental basis of Buddhist teaching and was of vital importance in learning understand it. In thanking Ajahn Sumedho Reverend Ganshin said how privileged he felt to be at Three Wheels listening to his words. Andy Barritt remarked on how fortunate he felt to be able to listen to today’s dialogue between the wonderful Buddhist teachers present and how he really felt that Ajahn Sumedho’s words helped him to understand better his own tradition of Jodo Shinshu.

Finally, Christopher Barker, a young man who has been attending meetings at Three Wheels since February last year gave a short talk about a great decision he had come to in his life and that he was now going away to University to study to be a teacher. Christopher movingly expressed his gratitude to Reverend Sato and Three Wheels for giving him the strength to decide his direction, and said that the change in his life course was due to Three Wheels and its effect on him.

**Andrew Webb**



## **Reverend Kenshin Ishii arrives at Three Wheels.**

**In February 2006 we were pleased to welcome a new addition to the Three Wheels family. Reverend Kenshin Ishii, who will be joined by this family later this year, is now assisting long term with the running of Three Wheels and its activities. In the following letter, Christopher a young visitor to Three Wheels, describes his first encounter with Reverend Kenshin.**

To the community of Shogyoji Temple,  
It is with pleasure that I write to inform you of my first encounter with Reverend Kenshin and his introduction to the Three Wheels community at the 66<sup>th</sup> London Eza.

To help prepare for the Eza I came to work in the Zen garden on Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> of February. Having arrived at Three Wheels at 10 o’clock and being warmly

welcomed (as usual) by Kemmyo-sensei I went to the kitchen to greet the people there and to enjoy a cup of coffee.

After a very short time in the kitchen, there appeared in the doorway a person with marvelous expression of greeting. The figure stood with his right hand raised to head height as if waving and wore on his face such a wonderful smile that it was all I could do to smile back. From the far side of the kitchen table Kemmyo-sensei introduced us and I realised that I had definitely met Kenshin-san. We all promptly laughed and I felt that Kemmyo-sensei was very happy to see us meet for the first time. It is with great happiness that I will in the future recall this day. Together with Daisuke-san and Professor Iwakuma, Kenshin-san and I helped in the gardening work under the careful guidance of Kemmyo-sensei. It was a day of hard work for me but



Reverend Kenshin Ishii

the laughter and good natured company allowed me to work cheerfully into the evening without discomfort.

The Eza was a splendid event for me with a talk by Professor Shimoda (of Tokyo University) of such clarity that Buddhism became enlivened in my mind. Professor John White provided more clarity when questions arose from the talk such that I felt very happy to be present to this remarkable person's insight.

Kenshin-san's "formal" introduction to the assembled community at the Eza was filled with even more mirth than our personal encounter and much laughter again poured from the hearts of those present.

I feel that you have made the correct decision to send Kenshin-san to Three Wheels. He remarked at the Eza, through a smile, that he feared the arrival of his family might bring trouble to London. It is with certainty I can say any trouble will be balanced by laughter and the service done here in London far outweighs the effort required by young children.

Christopher Barker



## Comments on the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting to read *The Letters* by Rennyo Shonin

On 7 January 2006, we had our 25<sup>th</sup> meeting to read the writings of Rennyo Shonin and about fifteen people came to Three Wheels to take part in it. We started by having a short service, led by Reverend Sato. We then listened to his talk discussing the eleventh letter of Fascicle 2 of *The Letters* by Rennyo Shonin. This letter discusses the five separate aspects of Shin Buddhist faith-experience, as well as two kinds of erroneous interpretations of Shin Buddhist teachings.

Rennyo Shonin seems to have written this letter to tell his followers how important true faith is in the Shin tradition. He emphasises this point by examining the two heterodoxies, "Ten Kalpas Faith" and "Entrusting Only to a Good Teacher". "Ten Kalpas Faith" states that one only has to know that birth in the Pure Land was ensured for them ten kalpas ago when Amida Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment. This mistakes faith for a form of knowledge. Rennyo Shonin points out that it is the instantaneous awakening of faith attained through taking refuge in Amida Buddha that is of

crucial importance in the Shin tradition. Nembutsu is not something that one can comprehend logically but something that emanates naturally from within.

The second heterodoxy Rennyo discusses is "Entrusting Only to a Good Teacher." This belief states that one only needs to entrust oneself to a good teacher, nothing more. However, Rennyo Shonin says, "The function of a good teacher is simply to encourage people to take refuge single-heartedly and steadfastly in Amida." The true significance of a good teacher is that he points his followers in the direction of truth. You shouldn't mistake your master for truth itself.

The rest of Rennyo Shonin's letter examines the five separate aspects of the Shin Buddhist faith-experience. Reverend Sato described them as: 1) Your past good conditions become mature enough to encounter the Buddha-dharma. Maturity of past good conditions means not only the maturity of your consciousness, but also all the external conditions that have led



The reading of Renny Shonin's letter

you to meet the Buddha-dharma; 2) When your past good conditions become mature, you will be able to encounter a good teacher. In the Shin Buddhist tradition, a good teacher represents all Buddhas and his nembutsu represents all Buddhas pronouncing the name; 3) When you encounter a good teacher, through the maturity of your past good conditions, you will find yourself embraced in the Infinite Light of Amida. Our existence is illuminated by the Light that radiates through the teacher's pronouncing of the Name; 4) On finding yourself embraced by the Light of the Buddha, you will attain faith by entrusting yourself to the Buddha. This is other-power faith; and 5) finally,

after attaining faith, you will pronounce the Name of the Buddha with joy and gratitude.

After Reverend Sato concluded his talk, we had a lovely lunch. Then Reverend Sato allowed those of us who were unable to attend the New Year's meeting, to take part in drinking the ceremonial sake drinking to celebrate the passing of the New Year. Lastly, Professor Satoshi Iwakuma from Fukuoka University, graciously prepared ceremonial green tea for all of us.

In Gassho,  
**Mary-Patricia Hall**



### Shoshinge Lecture at the Buddhist Society.

**Every month a meeting is held at the Buddhist Society London to study The Shoshinge by Shinran Shonin. The following report discusses the contents of Reverend Sato's talk given on the 12 February 2006.**

About 10 people attended Reverend Sato's 8<sup>th</sup> talk on the Shoshinge on 12<sup>th</sup> February.

Following on from the initial description of Amida's original prayer, the next 24 lines of the Shoshinge concentrate on the appearance of the Tathagatas'

in the world to help us attain faith in order that the prayer may be fulfilled. Reverend Sato pointed out that "Tathagatas'" actually refers to all Buddhas and not just Shakyamuni, although he is the one most familiar to us as the only Buddha to have made a physical appearance in this world to teach the Dharma. From his various commentaries Shinran Shonin had obviously accepted the plural use of the word.

The gatha tells us that the sole purpose for the Tathagatas' appearance in this world is their desire, as a manifested aspect of the formless Dharmakaya, to

save beings by teaching them the ‘ocean of Amida’s Original Prayer’. Reverend Sato commented that ‘Ocean’ was a suitable metaphor for the depth and profundity of this Prayer as it conveyed a sense of boundless breadth and bottomless depth, although Shinran also used ‘ocean’ to portray the multitudes of ignorant beings. As this Prayer is the only one embracing all sentient beings without discrimination, both Shinran and Rennyō Shōnin stressed the importance of our truly entrusting ourselves to it. Through hearing this Dharma, faith can be instantaneously awakened within us in a moment of non-discriminative thought in the immediate present; filling us with joy and love and enabling us to attain Nirvana without destroying blind passions.

Reverend Sato commented that this last statement is inspiring but it is difficult to ascertain from it where the attainment of Nirvana will take place - either in the Pure Land (Shinran’s view) or as a benefit given in this world (Rennyō’s view). He explained that an apparent contradiction between the teachings of Shinran and Rennyō over this matter was due to their different understanding of the phrase ‘the

state of Nirvana’ in T’an-Luan’s ‘Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land’. Shinran had been influenced by his training in the Tendai ‘One Vehicle’ School which taught that fundamentally there is no separation between the passions and enlightenment and transmigration and Nirvana. This truth is said in the Shin tradition to be realised in the Pure Land. Rennyō, however, taught that our blind passions can be transformed through the benefit of the power of the Original Prayer in this world, assuring even the worst evil-doers of birth in the Pure Land and ultimate attainment of Nirvana. Although their teachings are essentially identical, Reverend Sato felt that Rennyō’s interpretation relates more to our present existence.

In the last of the 8 lines covered in this talk, Shinran describes how in the Ocean of the Great Compassionate Prayer all beings become as one, as their ignorance and blind passions are transformed into wisdom and compassion, just as many waters flow into and merge with the ocean.

Hazel Waghorn



## Shin Buddhism Teaching: What is *Anjin* (安心)?

**In the talk he gave on the Fifteenth Letter of Fascicule 2 of the *Letters* by Rennyō Shōnin, Reverend Sato discussed the meaning of the *Anjin*, a very important term in Jōdo Shinshū.**

The original Japanese word for “peaceful awareness” is *anjin* 安心, which is understood as synonymous with faith (*shin* 信 or *shinjin* 信心) in the context of Shin Buddhist teaching. The original meaning of the compound 安心 is “to settle the mind.” In Pure Land Buddhism the only way truly to settle the mind is to entrust oneself to Amida Buddha wholeheartedly, in other words to attain faith. The Japanese term *anjin* is also often translated as “settled mind”. If you settle your mind in the embrace of Amida Buddha, your mind can be said to have been “settled.” In this sense faith is a “settled mind.” When *anjin* means “settling the mind,” it pertains to “attaining faith.” After the attainment of faith *anjin* means the “settled mind,” the state of mind when faith has been attained. Nowadays the word *anjin* is more frequently used in

the latter sense, referring to the state of mind after the attainment of faith. In this sense some people translate the word as “peaceful mind,” which well conveys the sense of “inner peace” contained in the word *anjin*. Another important meaning attached to the word *anjin* in Shin Buddhism is “awareness”, awareness of *ki* 機, or the self, and at the same time awareness of *ho* 法, or the Dharma. In as far as it is true that the essence of Shin Buddhist faith lies in awakening to the reality of one’s wretched existence and simultaneously to the great compassion of the Buddha, *anjin* can be said to include the element of awareness. When taking this interpretation I understand the Chinese character 心 of *anjin* 安心 as the word that can convey the sense of awareness. Hence my rendering of the word *anjin* as “peaceful awareness.”

In this context let me quote to you from the 15<sup>th</sup> letter of Fascicule 2 of the *Letters* by Rennyō Shōnin:

**What is the meaning within our tradition of**

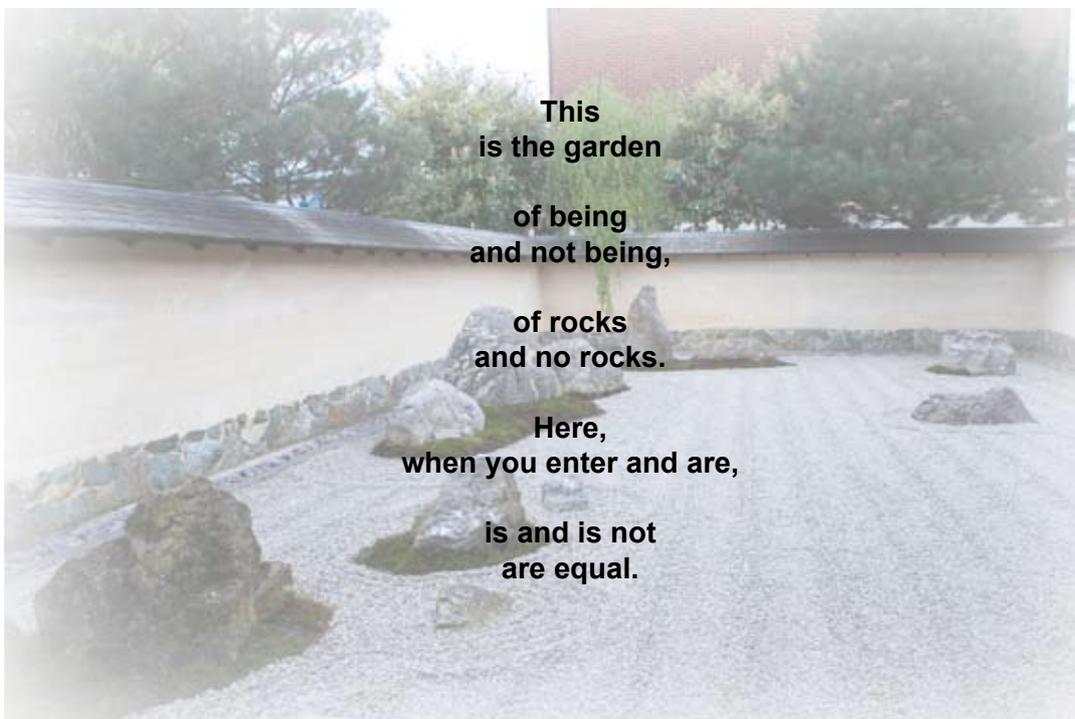
‘peaceful awareness’ (faith)? First of all we should really take to heart the fact that we are worthless beings burdened with the ten transgressions and the five grave offences, the five obstacles and the three hindrances. Next we should become aware that it is the inconceivable working of Amida Tathagata’s Original Prayer that saves such wretched beings as ourselves by making them its main object of salvation. When we entrust ourselves wholeheartedly [to Amida Tathagata] and do not entertain the slightest doubt, Amida will embrace us without fail. It is precisely this awareness that constitutes the true Other-Power faith that we

have already attained. In order to gain this faith instantaneously (with one thought moment) there is no need of effort on our part.

It is said in the Shin Buddhist tradition that the notion of “true faith” includes two kinds of awareness 二種深信: 1) awareness of *ki* or the self and 2) awareness of *ho* or the Dharma. This is the viewpoint from which Rennyō Shōnin clarifies here what *anjin* or peaceful awareness really is. There is nothing further that needs to be added to his kind teaching, overflowing as it is with joy and gratitude



### Poet’s Corner: John White.



This  
is the garden

of being  
and not being,

of rocks  
and no rocks.

Here,  
when you enter and are,

is and is not  
are equal.



### POSTCARDS AND SEASONAL GREETING CARDS ARE AVAILABLE AT THREE WHEELS.

*Editor’s Note.*

*For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to include material for inclusion, please contact Lucien Chocron, 31 Sherlock Court, Dorman Way, London, NW8 0RU, Tel/Fax 020 7722 1693, Email: [lucienchocron@msn.com](mailto:lucienchocron@msn.com).*

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