



Three Wheels NEWS



London Shogyoji Trust

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PRAYER FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The 105th London Eza and annual ceremony to pray for world peace and reconciliation between British and Japanese war veterans.

On the 18th August 2012 at Three Wheels we held our annual ceremony to pray for World Peace and Reconciliation between Japanese and British war veterans. The Eza was chaired by Mr. Andrew Webb who began by welcoming Mr. Hitoshi Noda, the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Embassy of Japan, who gave the opening address. Mr. Noda expressed his thanks to Three Wheels together with everyone past and present who has participated in these annual peace and reconciliation Ezas which he praised as a successful forum for spiritual exchange. Mr. Noda paid tribute to the late Mr. Philip Malins, a British war veteran from the Burma Campaign, for the invaluable part he played in creating a path to understanding and friendship of which this Ceremony was an integral part. Mr. Noda also spoke of his happiness to hear of the recent special service held by the Burma Star Association Bedford Branch to which Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato from Three Wheels and Japanese members of the Burma Campaign Society were invited.

Monks, from other Buddhist Denominations in the U.K, which included Ven. Ganshin Rock from the Tendai School, Ven. Bhikkhu Nyanarato from Amaravati (Theravada School) and Ven. Gyoro Nagase from Nihonzan Myohoji (Nichiren School) were invited to chant Sutras before the Buddha Shrine.



During the talk given by Rev. Sato after service

For the first time in the history of the London Eza we welcomed a representative from Canterbury Cathedral,

the Right Reverend Bishop Richard Llewellyn who gave an address the Eza. Speaking on the theme of peace and reconciliation, Bishop Llewellyn affirmed that if we truly recognise others as human beings, just like we are, then we cannot feel hatred towards them.



Mr. Hitoshi Noda, the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Embassy of Japan,

Following the traditional shaking of hands among the participants of the Eza as a expression of peace and reconciliation, Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato gave a talk entitled 'Interfaith Dialogue, Reconciliation and Memorial Service'. Looking towards the future, Rev. Sato concluded with the following moving words of respect towards some of those who had done so much for our annual Peace and Reconciliation Eza, "Masao, Maurice and Philip, our great friends, have passed away, but in accordance with their will we have to go forward towards our common goal of world peace and reconciliation by always returning to the inner peace of faith".

A message of gratitude from Mr. Satoru Yanagi was next read out. Mr. Yanagi recalled his joyfulness at being reconciled in the deepest spiritual dimension with British war veterans he had once fought against. Full of hope for the future, Mr Yanagi wrote, "Each and every one of you gathered at Three Wheels, please pray for peace in your own place and in your own way".

We then heard from several other guests who have long

been supporting the annual Peace and Reconciliation Ceremonies at Three Wheels. Mrs. Phillida Purvis, from the International Friendship and Reconciliation Trust, recalled important events from the life of Mr. Philip Malins and the great work he had done towards world peace through all the many activities he was involved in to further this aim. Mrs. Akiko MacDonald from the Burma Campaign Society spoke of the work of the BCS and the relationship between her own father and Mr. Malins who both went beyond their past animosity as combatants in the Second World to become firm friends. Prof. John White

tied together many of the themes spoken of during the afternoon by stressing the vital importance for the world of even a few people gathering together with the common aim of working towards harmony and reconciliation. Prof. White emphasised how world peace can only be achieved by each individual's attainment of inner peace.

To conclude the busy program of events Mr. Andrew Webb welcomed back to London from Japan Rev. Kenshin Ishii and his family and also Rev. Washo Shinohara a young priest from Shogyoji Temple.

Andrew Webb

RECENT ACTIVITIES AT THREE WHEELS

The History of Three Wheels – A Report on the 104th London Eza

The Eza was opened with a visual presentation entitled 'Encounter and Mutual Understanding - A History of Three Wheels based on the Ideal of Harmony within Diversity' given by Rev. Kenshin Ishii. This was a summary of Three Wheels' spiritual development over the last twenty years based on the ideal of 'harmony within diversity'.



Rev Ishii during his talk

During the first part of his talk Rev. Ishii explored the history of the relationship between University College London, Shogyoji Temple and Three Wheels mainly through the first hand recollections of Mr Kenji Toda whose encounter with Prof. Sir Derek Roberts and Prof. John White, the Provost and Vice Provost of UCL, eventually led to the establishment of Three Wheels. UCL was also the school where enterprising Japanese youths from Choshu and Satsuma, who traveled to London at the risk of their lives in 1863 and 1865, were accepted as foreign students. Rev. Ishii next introduced five students, known as the 'Choshu Five', and the unique contributions they each made to the modernization of Japan. Rev. Ishii then discussed the lives of another four Japanese students who, although not well known in Japanese history, also risked their lives to come to Europe to study and were subsequently deeply important to the history of Three Wheels. Before their untimely deaths through ill health these four young students were cared for by their teacher Prof. Alexander Williamson and his wife Catherine in their own home.

Reflecting on the great love Prof. and Mrs. Williamson showed towards these students, Rev. Ishii defined it as a manifestation of "Amida's love and compassion which saves such ignorant and selfish people like me". Rev. Ishii went on to look at the many ways in which Three Wheels had been developed and supported by Prof. John White who has been dedicating his life not only towards Shogyoji and Three Wheels but also for people who wish to receive authentic Shin Buddhist teachings in the English language.

Mr. Andrew Webb, chairing the Eza, in summarizing the presentation said that it was evident from Rev. Ishii's talk that the very origin of Three Wheels could be seen in the love and compassion shown by Prof and Mrs. Williamson to the students who died in their care. Mr. Dave Zimmerman commented that "it was eye-opening to see what was done in the past, to bring Three Wheels to where it is today".

After a report on the 9th Shokai Retreat was given by Mr. Matthew Albiges several of the participants gave their impressions of the retreat. Mr. Duncan Kennedy recalled all the help and support given by Dharma-friends to make the retreat possible and thanked Rev. Sato and everyone for providing the special conditions needed to hold a retreat at Three Wheels.

Mrs. Mako Webb gave a report on the 12th Spring School in which 7 students from Japan and 4 resident in this country stayed at Three Wheels for two weeks to study Buddhism and visit many important sites around London and Cumbria.

The London Eza was concluded in the usual manner and was followed by a communal meal together and friends old and new mingled together happily in the Taya house and garden.

Sam Kelly

Translating Shin Buddhism – The 103rd London Eza

The 103rd London Eza took place on the 28th April from 13:00. Andrew Webb chaired the meeting and welcomed guests to Three Wheels. After the service and reading of Rennyō's Letter, the Chair introduced Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato's talk, entitled 'Are We Already Buddhas?'

This talk examined with great detail and clarity one of the problems regularly encountered when rendering Shin Buddhist texts into English, namely how to translate the Japanese word *toshogaku*. Having clarified some of the essential points of Shin Buddhist teaching Rev. Sato went on to look at the notion of *toshogaku* a phrase which some translators had rendered as the 'Equal of Enlightenment', a term which Rev Sato explained could be misleading and lead people to an erroneous understanding of Shin Buddhism. Examining the doctrinal background of *toshogaku* from two important Buddhist Sutras, Rev. Sato then defined the reason for his own translation as 'Proximate Enlightenment', meaning a stage proximate, or as close as possible, to the Buddha's Supreme Enlightenment.

After the talk Prof White commented that he would like anyone that is able to help in the running of Three Wheels to contribute as much as possible. In order to allow Rev. Sato to further concentrate on his translation work. Prof White added that Rev. Sato is the only person alive who can translate Shin Buddhist texts into English spiritually as well as academically.

Next Rev. Ishii gave a PowerPoint presentation in English on the "Mile Stone Project". This explained the purpose and meaning of the 750th Memorial Ceremony (Goenki) for Shinran Shonin. The contents of the talk and Rev Ishii's enthusiasm, as well as the deep heartfelt efforts of his English friends who had helped his translation, powerfully penetrated our hearts. The "Mile Stone Project" has been ongoing at the main temple in Japan, and has now for the

first time been transmitted to the Three Wheels Samgha in England. Through this project we have begun to learn the meaning and purpose of Goenki, and the way to prepare ourselves for the ceremony. This project and its theme "Togetherness" have become alive within us and the "Mile Stone Project" has now begun to work within the Samgha.



Andrew Webb chairing the Eza

Mrs. Etsuko Crellin, the representative of the Friends of Three Wheels, introduced her letter of appeal for the erection of a monument for Prof and Mrs. Williamson at Brookwood Cemetary. Mrs. Crellin quoted Venerable Chimyo Takehara's words that "This monument should be a place where we can encounter the unconditional love or the great compassion beyond discrimination" and also "the monument is as important as the Stupa of Namu-Amida-butsu". Mrs. Crellin asked members of the Samgha if they were able to donate a small contribution to the cost.

The 103rd Eza meeting was followed by a shared meal together with informal chat and discussion for the rest of the afternoon.

Kaori Punwani

THE 9TH SHOKAI RETREAT : What is the Nembutsu?

There were sixteen participants from a number of different towns, including Warwick, Nottingham, Birmingham and London. All enjoyed encounters and reencounters with Dharma friends in the embrace of the great compassion of Amida Buddha.

The retreat began with an introductory talk by Rev. Sato in which he spoke of the importance of true encounter as the starting point of faith. This was followed by Mr. Duncan K giving the traditional 'Vow of Sincere Practice' on behalf of all the participants. It was evident Duncan's Vow was meticulously prepared with great introspection and it played a significant part in shaping the rest of the retreat. To conclude the first evening of Shokai, Rev. Ishii gave a presentation about the 750th Memorial preparations at

Shogyoji and Three Wheels. Everyone was very inspired to learn about the history of the Memorial celebrations and the old photographs of the Shogyoji Samgha building the new Buddha Hall in 1958.

The next day started with work practice followed by *zazen* meditation, morning service and an Eza meeting. Having *zazen* at the start of the day is a new development enjoyed by all the participants. During the Eza Rev. Sato asked everyone to answer the question, "What is the nembutsu?" Mrs Mako W's answer of 'Home' resonated deeply with all and echoed Duncan's earlier vow.

Mr Andrew W. then gave a talk entitled "*Nembutsu and Samgha: An Appreciation of Chapter VII of the Tannisho*".

A particularly striking part of the talk related to Andrew's personal faith-experience, summed up in his poem 'Through one / true encounter / an immeasurable world / is revealed', to the Kegon philosophy of interpenetration or non-hindrance.

were shared in an atmosphere of warm support. It was a good opportunity to learn how others saw us.

On the final morning Rev. Sato gave a talk entitled 'Asahara Saichi and his Experience of Emptiness', but before doing so he referred back to Mr Duncan K's Vow of Sincere Practice and expressed how moved he was by Rev. Chimyo Takehara's vision for Three Wheels as a place to support world peace and cultural encounter, where we are encouraged to set aside the attachments of body and mind and to enter the 'House of the Buddha', as an antidote to our typically self-centered world view. In particular Rev. Sato pointed out that "for Saichi, Namu-Amida-Butsu was the bedrock of his entire life" This comment caused one follower to note that he has difficulty relating to the Buddha in such a personal and familiar way and he would therefore reflect on the question, "Am I familiar with the nembutsu in my daily life?"

The retreat drew to a close with a service to the Buddha and a talk of thanks by Mrs Mako W. in which she expressed her gratitude by saying "I felt so close to all my Dharma friends through listening to their expressions during the group meetings. I was so impressed by the honest way they could open up themselves to others".

Andy and Matthew



The Participants of the Shokai Retreat

After lunch the Samgha did work practice in the Three Wheels gardens in an atmosphere of positive teamwork and lively conversation. Following a rest break chanting was practiced under the supervision of Rev. Ishii, using a romanised sutra book created by him to assist the Samgha. After supper the Samgha separated into two groups for group *zadan* meetings in which progress and difficulties

A letter of thanks written by one of the participants of the 9th Shokai Retreat

Dear Rev. Sato,

I am writing to say how wonderful the recent Shokai was and how grateful I am to everyone who did so much to make it that way. We were blessed to have such a wonderful 'Vow of Sincere Practice' given by Duncan at the start, as well as your welcoming talk.

Each of the activities seemed to build on each other and that was reflected in the harmonious and productive work practice in the gardens. The innovation of having the meditation sessions at 7am was enjoyed by everyone and it made the morning services feel even more vibrant than usual. As ever we are indebted to Dave Zimmerman for this activity.

Andrew Webb's talk on 'Nembutsu and the Samgha' was particularly poignant and it was clear that we benefited from the time, effort and reflection he had given on our behalf. Thank you as well for your wonderful talk on 'Asahara Saichi and his Experience of Emptiness' it brought alive a subject that can sometimes seem difficult to grasp.

When we were giving our individual impressions, near the end, I said that for me each Shokai was another time when the Three Jewels shone out, bathing us all and, it was the time I felt closest to the Buddha.

In particular, those of us going to the 750th Memorial Service for Shinran Shonin, in Japan now feel as though we have taken the first steps on our journey to Shogyoji Temple after seeing the slides and thinking about what we can do as individuals for this event. Again, thank you so much to everyone who prepared the wonderful food and worked so hard to ensure Shokai was such a success. We must also thank the Japanese members whose support makes it possible for us to practice Shin Buddhism at Three Wheels.

Gassho,

Sam

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The 12th Spring School

Editor's Note: This report was given at the 104th London Eza

This year the 12th Spring School was held at Three Wheels between 24th March and 6th April. 11 Students, including 4 who live in this country, attended together with Rev. Washo Shinohara and Mr. Hirokazu Ogawa and Rev. Shodo Kuniyoshi a priest from Shogyoji Temple. There were also many Three Wheels Dharma friends who gave their time to assist.

The theme of this Spring School was the '*Gravity of Life*' and during their stay the Spring School students and staff shared many wonderful encounters together, both with each other and with the many people they met in this country.

Every day they attended morning and evening services and shared their impressions about things they had learnt together in front of the Buddha. As the main spiritual theme of their stay they read aloud together the '*Sutra On the Weight of What Has Been Done For Us By Our Parents*' and each gave their impressions of the what this Sutra meant to them. For those who did not live in Japan and were more comfortable reading in English, they read together Rev. Sato's new English translation of the Sutra. This translation work was greatly appreciated as it meant that everyone could now participate in this most important activity.

As well as this the students stayed for 3 days in Cumbria enjoying the beautiful countryside, visited UCL and Brookwood Cemetery which are very important to the history of Three Wheels, and they also went to see various other historical places of interest including Windsor Castle and St. Pauls Cathedral.

Four of the Spring School students live in this country. They have one or more Japanese parents and having been attending Three Wheels since they were young children through our monthly Children's Meetings. Now they are older, they have been attending our Student Meetings. When they are adults they will also be able to attend our Shokai retreats.



The Students listening to Prof. White explaining the design of the Zen Garden

Whether it is attending the Children's Meeting, Student's Meeting, the London Eza, the Shokai Retreat or any of the many activities that are held at Three Wheels, the purpose of all of these activities are one and the same – to become aware of the reality of our own selves and of Amida Buddha's love and compassion for us.

Finally I would like to thank Three Wheels for giving me the opportunity to assist at this year's Spring School along with my young child and my husband. It was a really valuable encounter for us all.

Mako Webb

Meditation at Three Wheels

Every Monday at 19:30, Three Wheels Temple conducts meditation sessions. These sessions are open to all levels, from beginners to the experienced. Personally, it is through the meditation service that I had come to know the Three Wheels Samgha and all that it does. In support of this important point of contact that Three Wheels has established with the community, I'd like to describe and explain what goes during these sessions.

Before the session begins, there is time to ask questions about meditation. Rev. Kemmyo Sato is very helpful when introducing meditation to beginners. He advises people on how to achieve the correct posture, breathing, and mental

focus to maintain throughout the session. Otherwise, it is nice to relax in the Zen garden or have tea with Mrs. Hiroko Sato. Many people come to meditation from work. This time to relax before meditation can have a strong impact on the meditative experience.

When 19:30 comes about, we enter the Buddha room for meditation. By the door, stacked, are small, round meditation cushions (or *zafus*). Each person picks up a *zafu* and bows upon entering the room. Once everyone has taken a place near the walls the session can begin. Evening service commences with the bell rung in a symmetrical pattern and chanting of the *Sanseige* (a short Buddhist

verse or *gatha*).

Afterwards, the facilitator of the session will sit facing the group before a small board on which rests two sticks of incense, a lighter, a small bowl of ash, two wooden clapping blocks, and beside the block, a bell and striker. One stick of incense is lit and placed upright in the bowl, supported by the ashes of incense from previous meditation sessions. The wooden blocks are clapped together, waking up the mind to the present moment. The bell is rung three times. Each ring is allowed to fade into silence before the bell is struck again. As the third ring fades away to silence the meditator settles into meditation.



Meditation in the Stone Garden

It is important to note that there are different ways to sit in meditation. Some people sit in the “full lotus” position, with legs crossed and both feet resting on top of the thighs. Some people sit in “half lotus” position, with one foot resting on top of the opposite thigh. These two positions may be difficult for some people. They may choose to sit in a kneeling position using a small bench or a zafu positioned sideways. For those who find this uncomfortable, a chair may be used. The intent of the practitioner is to find a position that they can hold for an extended period of time. After finding the proper posture for meditation, the practitioner’s attention moves to the breath. This practice helps to unify the mind with the body and lessens the discursive thoughts. A simple counting activity is used to keep the mind from wandering.

Throughout the session, the practitioner makes small adjustments to posture, breathing and attention. Eyes are open, but vision is blurred in a relaxed gaze. Thoughts rise and they fall. The urge to scratch imaginary itches and other distractions arise as the mind struggles to keep the body still. Aches and pains become more acute as mind grasps for content. The practitioner is encouraged to not react to these impulses, as they may disturb fellow meditators. By staying non-reactive to mental impulses, the practitioner develops self-discipline and deepens the experience.

The incense stick burns away, filling the room. The session lasts as long as the incense, with the bell ringing at the end and the blocks clapping to conclude. The group bows with palms together (*gassho*), and takes a small break to stretch and reposition themselves. If one method of sitting is not working out for the practitioner, then another can be tried for the second session. The second session is conducted in the same way as the first. When the second session is over, a short closing ceremony is conducted and the meditators are free to go, or stay for tea and biscuits in the kitchen.

During this *Kitchen Eza*, the group has an informal chat. Many of the topics relate to meditation, Buddhism, and life in general. This is an opportunity for people to reflect on anything that might be of concern. This usually lasts till 21:15, then the group breaks up for the night.

These meditation sessions have been very beneficial. For Three Wheels, these sessions bring in people from all over the world for a genuinely enriching encounter. For those who participate, Three Wheels provides a place which allows people to unwind and explore their lives in a kind of introspective workshop. The well-being that can be developed here can be taken into the other aspects of life. This is why I’ve been a regular participant in these sessions and it is why I’d encourage anyone else to participate.

Meditation is held at Three Wheels every Monday from 19:30. Please check the website calendar for any adjustments to the schedule.

Dave Zimmerman

Garden Open Days, 6th and 7th July 2013

We are pleased to announce that our next Garden Open Days, in conjunction with the National Garden Scheme, will be held on the 6th and 7th July from 14:00 to 17:30.

Please come along with your family and friends. Enjoy the talks given by the designer and creator of the garden Professor John White together with Japanese Tea Ceremony by demonstrations our tea masters and tasting (additional £3).

New Encounters at the Shogyoji Summer Assembly

There were wonderful encounters among the young students during Spring School last March. Students who live in England and Japanese students who visited England for Spring School shared a memorable time at Three Wheels as well as at all the landmarks they all visited in London. They promised to meet up again in the near future after the Japanese students left the UK for home. A few months later during this summer, four students from the Three Wheels Students Group flew to Japan and joined the Summer Assembly held in Shogyoji where they could meet up once again. They arrived in Shogyoji a few days before the assembly began so that they could experience and get used to the life style at Shogyoji as well as get to know many people who live there. The staff held a pre-meeting to help them understand the contents of the talks later given at the assembly. All of the students were honoured to join the talk given by the Supreme Primate and meet with him. On behalf of the Students Group at Three Wheels, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the staff of the Students Group at Shogyoji and all the many people who looked after the students from England. Needless to say the British Students were all very happy to be reunited with their Japanese friends who participated in the Three Wheels Spring School as well as making hundreds of new friends. They announced in front of hundreds of people at Shogyoji that they will visit again next year! We all could understand that wherever we may live, as long as we continue to gather at Shogyoji, such a reunion is always possible.

Here are some of the impressions the students from England wrote while they were at Shogyoji.

Erica Masterton age 18

I am even considering spending some time in Japan to learn more Japanese. So next time I will be able to appreciate what the Primate says and understand Venerable Takehara and all the priests words better because there are a lot of things they say which are really great and inspiring



Nina Masterton age 13

Hearing the Primate's talk was very interesting as after reading part of his book, I was intrigued in what he was going to say. Although sometimes it was difficult to understand, I still got the main idea of that was being said. I was very interested in his talk on jealousy as it is something that we have all experienced.

Suzu Mamiya age 12

This was the first visit to Shogyoji for me so I didn't know many people. However the whole community welcomed me and people talked to me as if I had already known them. I think living in London, which can be an antisocial place, I was not used to that very much but soon I started to make many friends. Everyone made sure that I was always comfortable and looked after me so much. These are the only a few of the many reasons why I would definitely like to come back to this place next year.



Rina Punwani age 12

".....This year summer assembly was very special to me as my friends from England came over to Japan. I thought that made it more fun and exciting for everybody. My mum, Kenshin-san, Joshin-san, Emmyo-san gathered the London group up and gave us an explanation so that we have a better understanding of the talks. I would say that this pre-meeting really helped me a lot, and as a result I now have a much better understanding.

GLOSSARY: WHAT IS 'SAMGHA'?

Samgha is one of the Three Treasures of Buddhism, namely: *Buddha, Dharma and Samgha*. The original intent of the early *Samgha*, as taught by Shakyamuni Buddha, was that ordained people and lay followers should go forward together and seek to attain the ultimate goal of religious awakening. This ideal can be seen in Mahāyāna Buddhism as the Bodhisattva's notion of benefiting oneself and benefiting others. "Benefiting oneself (自利 jp. *jiri*)" means one's own awakening to the truth of life (Wisdom) and "benefiting others (利他 jp. *rita*)," helping others be awakened to the same truth (Love).

The *Shin Buddhist Samgha* is a religious community of both those who have already attained true faith and those who are yet to do so. Briefly put, in *Shin Buddhism* faith is an instantaneous experience of taking refuge in the Original Vow of *Amida Buddha* as the Mahāyānist ideal of benefiting oneself and benefiting others. This living experience of *shinjin*, or true faith is at the heart of the *Shin Buddhist Samgha*. All those who have attained faith should guide others towards doing so bathed always in the light of the Buddha-dharma. It is this pure spiritual encounter, or more accurately continuous re-encounter, between master and disciple or between *Dharma*-friends, that is the foundation of the *Shin Buddhist Samgha*. Thus our *Samgha* is not somewhere we flee to in order to escape the problems of our daily lives. Rather it should be a place where we become aware of the real problems of our existence and try and solve them in the light of the *Buddha-Dharma*.

From a recent talk by Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato entitled: 'Shin Buddhist Awakening of Faith, Encounter and Samgha'.

All the Japanese words written in Italic could be found in our Glossary at the Three Wheels Website.

POET'S CORNER : John White

**Night
from the valley**

**flows up
into the green fells,**

**weaves
a black velvet**

**out of the summer
bracken,**

**fades
in a mist
of moonlight.**

Coniston Waka

Editors' Note.

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