



# Three Wheels NEWS



London Shogyoji Trust

September 2014

Number 24

## “LOOKING AT ZEN GARDEN” - The 113th LONDON EZA

The 113th London Eza was held on Sunday 23rd February. It was very well attended with hardly enough room for everyone to fit in. After the service Professor John White gave a talk entitled “The Zen Garden” where he explained in great detail the history of Zen gardens and many of the considerations that are necessary to design them. He then went on to describe in detail many differing examples of Zen gardens, both ancient and modern, with the aid of many wonderful photographs of the gardens themselves. He also talked about the Zen garden at Three Wheels that he had designed and the many considerations that were needed before and during its construction.

following the meeting many people went to sit and look at Three Wheels Zen garden.

Next Rev. Daichi Gary Robinson from Chomon House spoke about the upcoming European Shin Buddhist Conference. This is held every two years and in 2014 it will be held in the U.K. at the Southampton Solent University Conference Centre from 1st - 4th September. The Conference theme will be Jodo Shinshu in Daily Life.

Afterwards Rev. Kenshin Ishii spoke about the upcoming Spring School and some of the activities that the Students, both Japanese and English, will be taking part in. During the Spring School the students will be studying the “Sutra on the Importance Of What Has Been Done For Us By Our Parents”, and the importance of thinking about this, no matter how old we are. He then went on to invite everyone to the *Hanamatsuri* or Flower festival, which is a festival celebrating Shakyamuni Buddha’s Birthday.



Prof. John White during his talk on the Zen Garden

After the talk had finished Professor John White was asked many questions by a very interested audience and



A view of the Zen Garden at Three Wheels



Rev. Daichi Gary Robinson

Finally Mr. Akizumi Ebikai, Miss Ryoko Makise and Miss Yamato Totoki introduced themselves. They are university students who will be acting as staff members to assist with the running of the Spring School. After the Eza, everybody was able to relax and socialize with friends old and new, and enjoy the fine food and drink contributed by the participants.

Chris Dodd

## “Realise a little and feel more!” - The 14<sup>th</sup> Spring School

The 14<sup>th</sup> Spring School was held at Three Wheels between 17<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. Participating were 6 students from Japan and 11 local students from the UK, together with three helpers, Mr Akizumi Ebikai, Miss Yamato Todoki and Miss Ryoko Makise. The students from Japan were accompanied for the first time by a lady leader, Mrs Sanae Takehara, the daughter-in-law of the Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple. A large number of Dharma friends from Three Wheels also lent valuable assistance.



The Japanese students and their attendants

The theme of this Spring School was “Realise a little and feel more!” and the students read each day extracts from *The Sutra on the Importance of What Has Been Done for Us by Our Parents*. Whilst the Japanese students read the Japanese version, the 11 local students had at their disposal a very new translation of the sutra completed by Rev. Kemmyo Sato. The impressions of the sutra offered by both the Japanese and the local students were extremely moving. On the last Saturday of the Spring School the students were joined by the members of the Three Wheels Children’s Meeting for the annual Flower Festival celebrating the birth of *Shakyamuni Buddha*. As



The Shrine of the Flower Festival

well as the traditional service of bathing the statue of the baby Buddha with tea, the children and students put on performances for which they had worked extremely hard over the previous weeks rehearsing their parts. Everybody had a very enjoyable time.

Besides enjoying the beautiful countryside of Cumbria for four days, the students visited UCL and Brookwood Cemetery, both of which are very important in the history of Three Wheels, and visited a number of other places of historical interest, including Westminster Abbey, Greenwich and Windsor Castle.

Andrew Webb



The Japanese students with Prof. John White after a visit to the Zen Garden

Here are the comments made by one of the students.

Nina Masterton (15)

‘This year’s Spring School was definitely a valuable experience which I have benefited from. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the majority of this Spring School, but in the time that I did, I enjoyed it thoroughly. I enjoyed spending time with temple friends from Japan and London. It was refreshing to see the students from Japan in awe at the fascinating city that I’ve grown to disregard.

Also, this year I was given the opportunity to re-read the Sutra “On what has been done for us by our Parents” and it has allowed me to obtain a deeper knowledge on the subject. As I had read this Sutra twice previously, my understanding of its content was already very clear. However having being given the opportunity to refresh my memory reminded me of my previous commitment to become grateful for what my parents do for me. I was able to recognise similarities between the sutra’s description of a child’s attitude towards their parents and my own



relationship with my parents. I am extremely thankful for being given the chance to re-read the sutra and share thoughts with others on the subject as it has made me realise that I need to commit myself to changing my own spiritual attitude. All I need is a reminder once in a while

to remain focused on acting gratefully towards others, which I know I can get from reading over this document or by, as Rev. Kenshin Ishii suggested, visiting the temple regularly.’

## “Faith in Shin Buddhism” - The 114th London Eza

Around 30 people gathered at Three Wheels on 27th April for the London Eza and to hear Rev. Kemmyo Sato give a talk entitled ‘*On Other Power Faith*’ which he had prepared especially due to the significant number of new visitors coming to Three Wheels in the past few months who had not yet heard about this important aspect of Shin Buddhism.



Rev. Kemmyo Sato

Rev. Sato explained that self-power, in the religious sense, signifies being proud of our own deeds as individuals and remaining tenaciously attached to them. In contrast Other-Power faith is the entrusting of the self to Other Power of *Amida*’s unconditional love, and importantly also has its origin in that love. The awakening of faith is entirely a gift from Other-Power.

As for *Amida*’s ‘unconditional love’, Rev. Sato explained that it is a love that is not conditioned by anything, including relationships and even the *Dharma* or religious truth. Transcending all forms of discrimination *Amida*’s great love is given in equal measure to all beings. This is the meaning of the saying that ‘all beings possess Buddhature’,

After the talk Mr Sam Kelly spoke about the recent inter-faith meeting with the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and noted how close the latter’s words were words were to much of Rev. Sato’s talk: “What can

we do. We can get out of the way of thinking and an ego controlled mindset so that is, can be. Then true ethics can arise.”

A lady called Rochelle asked Rev. Sato to say more about ‘the unconditional love that doesn’t discriminate between good and evil people’, especially since some religions seem to say that the divine does discriminate and that evil people will be destined for punishment or hell. Rev. Sato replied that even a person with very bad karma can be saved and noted that we tend to ask such questions thinking we are a good person, but when we look into ourselves: ‘Are we really?’ He said that when we look honestly at ourselves we see that we cannot be saved, but it is at that moment of realizing our karmic reality just as it is that *Amida*’s compassion appears and saves us.



Mr Sam Kelly

Rev. Kenshin Ishii added that the children who attend Spring School are all ‘good’ children in the conventional, secular sense but when they look into themselves they discover that they always ‘kill their parents’ spiritually in their minds by refusing to acknowledge how much they have received from their loved ones. Meeting this reality the children feel that they need to ask their parents for forgiveness and through this development parents and children could re-encounter in one another a deeper dimension of love.

Andy Barritt

## “Our Spiritual Attitude” - The 115<sup>th</sup> London Eza

The main event at the 115<sup>th</sup> London Eza was a talk by Rev. Kenshin Ishii entitled “Our Spiritual Attitude towards Listening to the *Dharma*”. His talk comprised of five parts namely:

- 1)The purpose of listening to the *Dharma*.
- 2)Two ways to be born in the Pure Land.
- 3)What is Other Power Faith?
- 4)Problems in our attitude towards listening to the *Dharma*.
- 5)The difficulty and importance of keeping the proper attitude towards listening to the *Dharma*.



Rev. Kenshin Ishii

Rev. Ishii clearly gave us the message that we are saved through faith alone and that this faith consists of awareness and awakening. There are huge differences between intellectual understanding and actual awareness. He carried on to say we cannot be awakened unless we keep a proper attitude towards listening to the *Dharma*. Listening to the *Dharma* means to listen not only with our ears but also through our heart and to follow teachings which might be beyond our understanding. His talk was entirely based on his own experiences and what he was taught by others. Rev. Ishii’s own attitude to the Buddha *Dharma* was itself a teaching for all of us who listened to his talk.

In response to Rev. Ishii’s talk, we heard from some of the visiting participants. Mrs Kaori Punwani firstly thanked Rev. Ishii’s on behalf of everyone and said that his talk was like an ‘oasis’ of *Dharma* water, just as Rev. Ishii had explained in his talk. This is left for us to drink with a right attitude, without losing the essence of the

water, and without being filtered by our selfishness. Mr Gordon Backhouse mentioned how fortunate we were to be born as human and that it was even more special to hear Shakyamuni Buddha’s words through Rev. Ishii. Rev. Daichi Robinson from Chomon House in Southampton said how important it was to change our own way of filtering the teaching we receive so that we can keep a high quality of *Dharma* teachings flowing into us.

We were delighted to welcome new visitors. Mat who stayed the previous night and attended the “Eve meeting” for the first time, expressed his appreciation for the hospitality and warmth that he had received. He continued to say that he felt that reading Buddhist books by himself was not really helping him. He was so happy to find out the meaning of the importance of encounter from coming to Three Wheels and through Rev. Ishii’s talk. Renata who used to live near to Three Wheels also expressed her joy at joining the meeting and explained how she was moved by the heartfelt welcome given to her by Mrs Hiroko Sato when she had made an unexpected visit to Three Wheels a month ago.



Mrs Renata Lukasik

Rev. Sato described the wonderful trip to Japan that he had the previous month with Prof. John White, who gave a talk entitled “Zen Garden” at Shogyoji Temple. Rev. Sato also informed us about the great discovery that he had in making contact with the descendent of Prof. and Mrs Alexander Williamson.

Kaori Punwani

## “Taking Refuge in Amida Buddha” – The 13<sup>th</sup> Shokai Retreat.

The theme of the 13<sup>th</sup> Shokai Retreat was “The meaning of taking refuge in *Amida Buddha*”. In his welcome message Rev. Kemmyo Sato explained Shinran Shonin’s special interpretation of taking refuge which he showed is caused by *Amida*’s call or “command” for us to take refuge in

him. This “command” is an expression of *Amida Buddha*’s unconditional love for all sentient beings. Reflecting on his recent encounter with his master Ven. Chimyo Takehara, Rev. Sato talked about the “spirit of service” which is embodied in the sacred vows of the Bodhisattva who both

venerates all Buddhas and serves all sentient beings, a vow which he saw embodied in the attitude of Ven. Takehara.

Next Mrs Kaori Punwani was asked to give the opening “Vow of Sincere Practice” in which she movingly described her recent experience of introspection when asked last year to give an impression on a Shin Buddhist text. Following supper we all shared a fruitful time of spiritual reflection and discussion in the first of the Retreat’s *Zadankai* group discussion meetings.

On Saturday morning Rev. Kemmyo Sato gave a talk on “Married Life in Shin Buddhism” As a preface to the talk Rev. Sato explained that married life in the context of his talk was an archetype of our interpersonal relationships with others. Rev. Sato went on to describe how, becoming aware of the extent of our self-love and how much this attitude has been harming others, we should try to love others just as they are whilst making sure we respect those aspects of others that are in fact beyond our grasp. True self-love, he said, is love for others. Rev. Sato’s talk sparked a free-flowing discussion among us on this paradox between “self-love” and loving others and how other people become mirrors to our innermost selves.

Lunch was followed by a very productive afternoon work session in the gardens of Three Wheels. After evening service we had a large group meeting in which we discussed our impressions of Rev. Sato’s talk and what we ‘felt in’ meant to take refuge in *Amida* Buddha.

Following the Sunday morning service Rev. Kenshin Ishii

asked the participants to share any impressions they had of the retreat so far. Ms Sally Haden who was attending *Shokai* for the first time described how very different this retreat was to the silent ones she was used too. The joy of being here, Sally went on to say, is in the heart to heart and person to person encounter. It is a new experience to participate in a retreat that is based on direct encounter rather than withdrawal from others.

After breakfast Mr Matthew Albiges gave his impression on the 8<sup>th</sup> Article from the collection “Thus have I heard from Rennyo Shonin”. Matthew described with great sincerity his own transforming encounter with the Buddha-Dharma and the path which lead him to becoming a resident in the Three Wheels *taya* community. In his response to Matthew’s talk Rev. Kenshin Ishii gave his own impression on the article. Main Sutras in Shin Buddhism begin with “Thus have I heard”, Rev Ishii said, this means our practice is listening and we listen to the Buddha’s teaching through our heart.

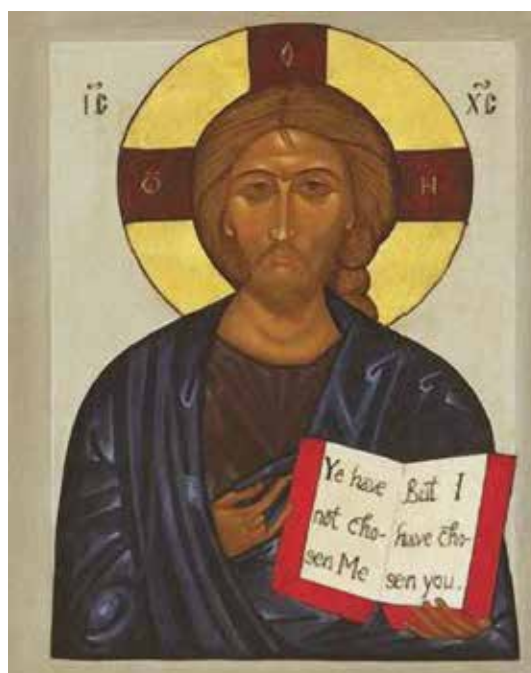
The closing Talk of Thanks was given by Mr Chris Dodd who expressed his gratitude for being given the opportunity to hear the Buddha’s teaching at Three Wheels which, he said, was a real treasure. Shin Buddhism is all about compassion, Chris went on to say, and I found so much compassion from the Three Wheels *Sangha*.

Andrew Webb

## THE THIRD CHRISTIAN-SHIN BUDDHIST INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Christian–Shin Buddhist Inter-faith Dialogue was held in Cambridge on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and attended by around twenty-two people. As soon as we arrived there was a warm and moving atmosphere as though the meeting had simply continued immediately from the previous one held many months before. For instance, I heard that before the inter-faith dialogue officially started Rev. Ishii was discussing how one ‘chooses’ a religious path with Father Tom Plant, an Anglican priest. Rev. Ishii said, “I don’t feel that I chose Shin Buddhism but that *Amida* Buddha chose me.” Just after this conversation we entered the Westcott House chapel and on the wall was an ikon of Christ with the words, “You did not choose me but I chose you” (John 15:16).

After a period of silence in the chapel, the meeting opened with Rev. Kemmyo Sato’s talk on ‘Salvation through Faith Alone’. Comparing passages from the letters of St. Paul with the poems of Saichi, Rev. Sato identified the mutual importance, in both Christianity and Shin Buddhism, of ‘the





awakening of faith and resultant immediate expression', the nature of faith-experience as 'an instantaneous leap' and an 'experience of rebirth, regeneration and resurrection'. He also identified three further points of common ground relating to faith-experience which are: other-power, faith as a gift, and that true faith is devoid of pride. He concluded his talk by saying that, "In the beginning, as I see it, there was an awakening of faith in an unconditional love beyond description and this pure experience was then followed by various teachings."

On this foundation the group then had a lively discussion covering such topics as: what it means to become one with *Amida* and/or the *Nembutsu*; the spiritual education of children; and whether Amida or God should be understood as 'persons'. Dr. Patrick Curry observed that Christianity and Buddhism avoid falling into Platonism or mysticism by viewing human beings as conditioned and limited. Father Plant added that "*Amida* is not *Amida* unless we all are, and God is not God without the incarnation [as Christ]." Bishop Rowan Williams reminded us that God is not an object among other objects but that it is easy to allow the limitations of language to trick us into thinking that is the case.

After an enjoyable lunch we reconvened for a talk by Bishop Rowan Williams in which he discussed the idea that "all beings are the object of divine commitment" and that we are bound together in community by all having received this promise or vow. He then spoke about the paradox of 'non-doing' and said that other-power is not just a 'bigger' version of self-power but rather 'what is; when we get out of the way'. He also spoke of the need to have "a steady awareness of who and what we are in relation to unconditional love" which reminded me of the Shin Buddhist doctrine of the two-aspects of deep mind.

The discussion that followed covered various topics such as the differences and similarities between meditation and prayer, and the dangers of quietism. We also touched briefly on the problem posed to interfaith dialogue by the Christian insistence on the uniqueness of the Christ.

The foregoing of course can only give the very slightest flavour of what was a very moving and interesting day. Special thanks must go to the organiser Dr. Katherine Wharton, as well as Bishop Michael for chairing the conference, and Westcott House for their hospitality.

Andy Barritt

## OTHER EVENTS

### "Pathways to Meditation."

Monday evenings are when a small group of people come together at Three Wheels to sit. Many of us, including the founders of Three Wheels have travelled thousands of miles to find ourselves encountering each other there. This is where I was asked to write a new article on the meditation sessions. In a previous article on meditation, I had written about how meditation is conducted at Three Wheels. In this article I'd like to explore the ways people become part of our meditation *Samgha*.

I used to be a more regular member of the sitting group. After the birth of my daughter, I found that life was becoming less predictable and more exhausting. This would make meditation even more useful and important for my own well-being, but still I found myself struggling to show up. Eventually, I would find myself answering the call within myself to return to the dharma and sit with the *Samgha*.

After sitting in meditation, we usually gather in the kitchen for tea and biscuits. There is no agenda and people usually just start talking to whoever they are sitting around. It is here that people who are new to meditation might be experiencing aches and pains that come with finding the

correct posture. It is also where many of the things that arise in meditation are explored and validated in the light of the *Buddha-Dharma*.

After many months of absence, I found that the *Samgha* had grown and changed. I met new members who had become regular members of the group and old members from my time as a regular. I wanted to know how people came to be members of the *Samgha*.

Some people came from other Buddhist traditions, including myself. I started looking for a sitting group after settling in the UK from the US. I had practiced Soto Zen with a group in my home town and found that after the business of becoming a British resident, I needed a place to sit. I searched online and found Three Wheels website. Living relatively close, I visited to learn more. I knocked on the door to be greeted by Hiroko-san. I asked about meditation to which she replied "Not today. Mondays." That ended our conversation. I showed up the following Monday and many more after that.

Many people come to meditation through the website. Many others come through their encounter with the Zen Garden

on Garden Open days which are conducted bi-annually. I had spoken with a member who told me of the strong impression that the garden had made and the encounters with members of Three Wheels which led to sitting in meditation. During the summer months, some people sit in the garden during meditation. It is something that I highly recommend. The sunlight remains for the entire duration of the sitting and fresh, cool air is invigorating.

Sometimes people come through the encouragement of friends or family that have been here before. One person that I had met was a longtime member of a different lineage of Buddhism. After a bit of cajoling by a trusted friend, he came to Three Wheels for meditation. He has since then sat with the *Samgha* several times. I have found speaking with him about the differences and similarities in various Buddhist traditions an enriching part of the session.

Many members of the *Samgha* have families that do not practice Buddhism. Through the sincere practice of friends and family members within our *Samgha*, people who would otherwise not encounter the *Buddha-Dharma* find themselves meeting and learning about us and what we do. These encounters are very powerful and leave lasting impressions, even if they do not become regular members of the *Samgha*.

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns. Many of them are difficult to understand and cope with, but sometimes they bring us to a place of greater understanding and a sense of peace. I recall a story of one member who after great personal loss, felt the need to calm her mind but did not know how to do it or where to go. After travelling halfway around the world and back in pursuit of something that could help, this member was told of a place called Three Wheels which just happened to be in the same neighbourhood that she lived in. She came to sit and has been a regular member ever since. Sometimes you have to travel around the world to get around the corner.

These are just a few examples of how people come to sit with us. Sitting in silent reflection can help the mind process what is impossible in our daily working lives. Having this time at Three Wheels provides many of us with a brief refuge from our daily lives, where we might not have people around that remind us of what is taught by the Buddha. Sitting with a *Samgha* changes this and in turn changes our perceptions of daily lives and by extension, the world that we live in. Whether you are new to meditation or a seasoned practitioner, there is a place to sit for you... on Mondays. I hope to see you there.

Dave Zimmerman

## National Garden Scheme (NGS) Garden Open Days

Yet again we had such wonderful Garden Open Days on 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> of June and 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> of July. Thank you very much to everyone who helped and visited us by paying the entrance fee helping to raise funds for charities such as Macmillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie Cancer Centre. NGS donated £2.1 million for their supported charities last year. Our visitors also had a unique insight into the history and meaning of our Zen Garden through the 40 minute talks given by the garden designer Prof John White. The three tea masters, together with their kimono-clad assistants, demonstrated and explained the tea ceremony to our guests. All the income generated from selling tea and books was donated to Three Wheels and the entrance fee directly to NGS.



The Tea Ceremony

## Wedding at Three Wheels

Very many congratulations to Sonia and Matthew whose wedding ceremony was held at Three Wheels on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014. All the guests from France and the UK enjoyed the warm weather and atmosphere both in the temple and outside around the Zen Garden as they celebrated Sonia and Matthew's new life together.

The couple made their vows together before the Buddha Shrine at a service conducted by Rev. Kemmyo Sato. If you would like to read more about marriage in Shin Buddhism please do visit the Three Wheels Website where you can download the talk by Rev. Sato entitled "Married Life in Shin Buddhism".

## Shin Buddhist Glossary: Shinjin

*Shinjin* (faith) is the key word of Shin Buddhist philosophy and refers to the spiritual awakening attained at the very moment of entrusting oneself to *Amida* Buddha. The profundity and subtlety of the Japanese term are such that in English translation the word is merely transliterated. In the Shin Buddhist documents, however, faith is often chosen as the

closest English word. At the same time, it should be noted that in Shin Buddhism the essence of faith lies very much in awareness or awakening, and never in blind faith or unquestioning belief. In Shin Buddhism the term has various connotations such as ‘awakening,’ ‘entrusting,’ ‘instantaneous leap’ and ‘purification of the mind.’”

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

## POET'S CORNER : John White



Prof. and Mrs Williamson's Monument

A river  
of light,  
  
the calligraphy flows,  
sings  
  
in the black  
granite,  
  
gives a haiku  
a new life,  
  
an existence  
beyond words.

*Monument Waka*

*Editors' Note.*

*For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to provide material for inclusion, please contact Dr Lucien Chocron, 31 Sherlock Court, Dorman Way, London, NW8 0RU, Tel. 020 7722 1693, Email: [lucienuk03@gmail.com](mailto:lucienuk03@gmail.com)*

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