



# Three Wheels NEWS



**Three Wheels is a branch of Shogyoji Temple in Japan**

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## The Funeral Service of Mrs Hiroko Sato

*In the early hours of 8 December 2018, Mrs Hiroko Sato (1944 – 2018) died very peacefully after a sudden and brief period of illness. For the 24 years she spent alongside her husband, Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato in charge of Three Wheels temple, Hiroko-san not only dedicated herself to its day to day activities but also to supporting the spiritual lives of everyone who entered through its doors. She constantly demonstrated this through her unconditional welcome and profound generosity of spirit which touched the lives of everyone who met her. This special edition of Three Wheels News is dedicated to the memory of Mrs Hiroko Sato who continues to support us from the Pure Land and is together with us in the Nenbutsu. Namu Amida-butsu.*

On the morning of 15th December 2018, a large number of people gathered to pay their respects to Mrs Hiroko Sato (Hiroko-san), who had sadly passed away a week earlier. In fact so many people came to Three Wheels that the Buddha room soon became full, and a great many people had to sit outside in the garden area, which also quickly filled up to almost overflowing. Despite the cold weather and biting wind, everyone was determined to attend to pay their respects and say a final thank-you to Hiroko-san.

The Service was led by Ven. Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji, our parent temple, who had come all the way from Japan to conduct the service. Even though it was such a solemn occasion, Ven. Takehara's chanting created an atmosphere of peace and stillness. With the very large gathering of Dharma friends and neighbours, all collectively emanating an atmosphere of genuine affection and gratitude towards her, Hiroko-san's natural kindness and caring concern for others seemed to manifest itself throughout the whole of Three Wheels. The chiming of the bells during the service added to the sense of peace and calmness. Ven. Chimyo Takehara then gave a farewell message to Mrs Hiroko Sato, whose Dharma name he had given as: "Shakyamuni's Disciple, Good Nun Wonderful Seed" [Note: the text of Ven. Takehara's message follows this article].

After Ven. Takehara's wonderful message, Prof. John White talked about Hiroko-san. He reminded us that without her helping her husband, Rev. Kemmyo Sato, over the last 25 years, Three Wheels as we know it would certainly not be possible and perhaps might not even exist at all. He said that everyone's own memory of Hiroko-san was enough to know that she was such a wonderful person, living a life of love and selflessness. He finished by quoting a Haiku poem that he had composed for Hiroko-san before he had visited her in hospital.



**The late Mrs Hiroko Sato**

You go  
so quickly

taking the Pure Land  
with you

and all  
of our love

Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato, Head Priest of Three Wheels Temple, and husband of Mrs Hiroko Sato, then gave a talk of thanks. He thanked everyone for their kindness towards Hiroko-san, especially Ven. Chimyo Takehara and his wife, who had come all the way from Japan, and also Prof. John White, for everything that they had done for her and for Three Wheels. He once again thanked Ven. Takehara for the very special Dharma name that he had given Hiroko-san, and said how happy she would be to receive it in the Pure Land.

The chanting of sutras continued and during this time everyone paid their respects and showed their gratitude by joining in with the burning of incense. This was carried out by everyone with the utmost respect for Hiroko-san, and in gratitude for all that she had done for us. Due to the large number of people in attendance, the chanting had

to be extended to allow everyone to offer incense. Then, with the same attitude of respect and gratitude, everyone silently placed flowers in her coffin and was able to say their final thank-you and goodbye.

For the last 24 years, Hiroko-san had been helping Rev. Kemmyo Sato with the development of Three Wheels and its Sangha, and without doubt she has planted the seed of the Buddha Dharma in everyone. She was able to and still continues to make the Buddhist teachings come to life and have real meaning, and her kindness and unconditional welcome towards everyone who visited will always resonate throughout Three Wheels. As Ven. Chimyo Takehara and Rev. Kemmyo Sato taught us, she will always be in the *Nenbutsu* together with us, and will always continue to illumine us, helping us on our journey to the Pure Land.

Namu Amida-butsu.

**Chris Dodd**



**The Funeral Service**

## A Farewell Message to Mrs Hiroko Sato.

*This is the eulogy to Mrs Hiroko Sato given by Ven. Chimyo Takehara, the Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple, at her funeral service.*

**A Farewell Message to Sato Hiroko-san, Shakyamuni's Disciple, "Good Nun Wonderful Seed" (meaning "an exemplary nun whose shining example planted wonderful seeds in the hearts and minds of others") by Ven. Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji.**

Mrs Hiroko Sato (Hiroko-san) left for the Pure Land in the West very quietly, embraced by the *Nenbutsu* of all the Dharma friends of the Sangha, which she has continued to watch over as the wife of a priest at Three Wheels.

For the last twenty-five years, ever since the original establishment of Three Wheels, we have been seeking after truth through a form of Mahayana Buddhism, known as Jōdo Shinshū, or Shin Buddhism, which could be called for short: "Working Living Buddhism". We have been learning just by living our lives, conversing with one another and engaging together in contemplation. The purpose is simply to see and realise for ourselves the way we are all embraced by the working of the Buddha.

Hiroko-san confirmed this working of the Buddha in the "here and now" through clear personal experience. She elucidated the actual reality of tathāgata where the Buddha is working, thus coming and thus going. This means that at any time and in any place, beyond the confines of time and space, we can encounter the Tathāgata.

Hiroko-san had been eagerly looking forward to taking part in the most important Dharma event ever to take place at Shogyoji, namely the great Dharma event to commemorate the life and work of Dharma Master Tosen. As the Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple, it was he who created the temple bell for the first time and welcomed its sound as the Buddha's voice three hundred years ago.



**Ven. Chimyo Takehara reading the eulogy**

On this special occasion we were able to welcome to Shogyoji both the Buddha-Image that Consists of the Three Honoured Ones within One Single Aura of Light, a portrayal believed to be the primary Buddha image in Japan, and also the image of Bodhisattva Maitreya, just as happened in the time of Prince Shōtoku.

This particular depiction of Bodhisattva Maitreya, known as the first National Treasure in Japan, was originally sent to Japan from Korea in order to commemorate the great virtue of Prince Shōtoku. To this day it is still preserved at Kōryūji Temple in Kyoto. This time, too, a very happy event, reminiscent of the previous presentation at the time of Prince Shōtoku, once again took place thanks to Venerable Jung-woo's kind offer.

Although Rev. Kemmyo Sato and Hiroko-san had been expected to take part in this hugely important Dharma event, he in the first half and she in the last, Hiroko-san was sadly

unable to realise her fervent wish, due to the unexpected flare-up of her illness.

Hiroko-san's own leaving for the Pure Land was preceded round about the time of this important Dharma event by similar departures, one after another, of a number of other long-time supporters of the temple.

Gazing at the beautiful silhouette of the eaves of the Taking-Refuge Round Shrine, someone observed that it resembled the wings of a great swan alighting on the ground. But we have had to witness a large flock of birds winging their way to the Pure Land.

Most of them were rather elderly and attained birth in the Pure Land very peacefully, but the sudden death of Hiroko-san, who was still working energetically for the Sangha, was totally unexpected, sending out shock waves not only in London but also through the whole Sangha of Shogyoji Temple.

At the same time all the British and Japanese Dharma friends were awakened to the fact that she was leaving behind her giant footprints in our history. In other words a mighty pillar of the Nenbutsu had been erected in the Sangha. Like Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Prof. John White has been responding to the leadership of Rev. Kemmyo Sato by supporting Three Wheels from its earliest foundation. So too, Hiroko-san's ceaseless efforts have mirrored the endeavours of Bodhisattva Avalokitēśvara.

Prof. White visited Shogyoji for the first time twenty-six years ago and it was shortly after that time that he lost his own beloved wife, Xenia. I will never forget how sad he was then. Faced now with Hiroko-san's departure for the Pure Land, he exhibited the same sorrow, the latter half of his life condensing into the tears of sympathy he shed over Hiroko-san.

As the wife of a priest in the Sangha, Hiroko-san was literally a central figure. The truth of the Buddha-dharma regenerates itself in the mind of the receiver. The source of this regeneration stems from the realm we cannot see with our eyes.

Now that the time has come to bid farewell to Hiroko-san, the following poem, dedicated by Prof. White to [his late wife] Xenia, will allow us to glimpse what was in the back of his mind all the time he was supporting Three Wheels.

You are so long  
gone,  
but happy  
to love you still  
I have no  
regrets.

Two years ago this December, at my request, Hiroko-san paid an unbelievably fruitful visit to Plum Village in France for training in meditation. Whilst firmly believing that Shin Buddhism is the ultimate culmination of Mahayana Buddhism, I have also been thinking that it is only by performing that traditional practice of early Buddhism as the very foundation of Mahayana Buddhism that we can fully realise the Nenbutsu of gratitude with absolute certainty.

Towards the end of her meditation training, Hiroko-san had an extraordinary experience. Noticing that the temple bell at Plum Village was similar to a Japanese one, she read the inscriptions on all four faces of the bell and realised that all the past good conditions that had led her to the teaching of Nenbutsu, namely the names of the good teachers from the Sangha, also featured on the bell as the names of the great bodhisattvas.

"I take refuge in Samantabhadra, the Bodhisattva of 'Great Practice'; I take refuge in Avalokitēśvara, the Bodhisattva of 'Great Compassion'; 'I take refuge in Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of 'Great Wisdom' and I take refuge in Kṣitigarbha, the Bodhisattva of the 'Great Vow'." The names of the good teachers from whom she had received the teaching of the Nenbutsu were written there as the names of real bodhisattvas.

The moment she read those names inscribed on the bell, the Nenbutsu welled up from within and her eyes filled with tears. She was able to confirm that wherever on this globe one was, one could encounter the true working of the Tathāgata in the "here and now". This encounter, which had first appeared to be simply a one-off occurrence, subsequently began to develop in an incredible way and one year later, without any request from our side, Brother Phap Ho, Head of the Plum Village Monastery, and three others came all the way from France to visit Shogyoji Temple in Japan.

During their visit they expressed their deepest respect by circumambulating clockwise in meditation around the Buddha-name Stupa for Daigyo-in-sama (Great Practice), the former Head Priest of Shogyoji, and the Stone Lantern for Dharma mother Daihi-in Ekai (Great Compassion), both of which stand there symbolising the very starting point of the present Shogyoji Sangha. At this point, Hiroko-san's son Rev. Emmyo Sato experienced the "working of the Buddha", just as his mother had done. There was a miraculous correspondence here between mother and son. What had happened to her was being repeated again for her son.

A few hours after Hiroko-san's return to Three Wheels from Plum Village, the Head priest of Horenji Temple, where Rev. Kemmyo Sato was born, attained birth in the Pure Land. Hiroko-san's experience could be interpreted as a sign of the great happiness felt by her older brother-in-law who had been watching over her warmly.

I have learned from my wife who visited Hiroko-san at hospital that Hiroko-san would say to any visitor, "only the Nenbutsu", "No regret at all, only gratitude" with immovable confidence. Surrounded by Rev. Kemmyo Sato, their son, Rev. Emmyo Sato, their daughter, Mrs Yukiko Kinugawa, Rev. Kenshin Ishii and my wife, Michiko Takehara, Hiroko-san listened with right mindfulness to the sutra being chanted by them at her deathbed. By a mysterious coincidence, this chanting took place at the same time as the chanting of sutras for the third anniversary of the late Rev. Kenjun Sato, Rev. Kemmyo Sato's eldest brother, conducted by myself at Horenji Temple, the home temple of the Sato family.

Hiroko-san was so pleased on her deathbed to be able to hear the Nenbutsu being recited by the Dharma friends of the home temple, far away from London. There can be no more certain evidence than this that the Nenbutsu moves our

minds and hearts beyond the confines of space and time. That everything is interdependently related is the fundamental idea of Buddhism. Thus all things are found in oneness. You and I are not two. Mountains, rivers, trees and grass are not separate from one another. This country and that country are not two. Everything in this world is just the one flower, you could say.

When you abide in this thought at the Sangha, there will be a series of new encounters with one another, “Oh, you are here, and you, too.” Once one cherry tree begins blooming, then all the mountain is immediately covered with cherry blossoms. What a wonderful scene we encounter. The real evidence that there is “a Buddha who is working” is manifest here at this moment.

Though we may forever feel nostalgic for her actual

existence, Hiroko-san has returned to the Pure Land, telling us not to leave anything to regret. I have learnt that the Pure Land is a place where we can enjoy working for others with no hindrance at all. I am absolutely sure that, starting from tomorrow, it will be her legacy to keep showing us the virtue and enjoyment of working for others.

Hiroko san in the Pure Land, please continue to illumine us from this day forward.

Namu Amida-butsu, Namu Amida-butsu.

**Chimyo Takehara**

**Shogyoji Sangha**

## A Letter of Thanks at the End of the Mourning Period

Namu Amida-butsu

As I reflect with deep humility on the death of my wife, Hiroko, I remember how warmly she was welcomed forty-eight years ago into the Shogyoji Sangha in Fukuoka, Japan. There she followed our masters, first Dharma-Mother Ekai and then Ven. Chimyo Takehara, the Head Priest of the Temple, before quietly and peacefully attaining her original desire to be born in the Pure Land on the 8 December 2018 here in London, embraced in the great love and compassion of the Tathāgata and of so many good friends and teachers. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for your long-standing friendship and for the tireless help and support you have always shown us.

Ven. Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji, who paid us the unexpected honour of coming all the way from Japan to officiate at Hiroko’s funeral, has bestowed upon her the very special Dharma-Name of “Shakyamuni’s Disciple, Good Nun, Wonderful Seed” (an exemplary nun whose shining example planted wonderful seeds in the hearts and minds of others). Looking back over the marvellous encounters we have enjoyed with so many people during the last twenty-five years here at Three Wheels in London, I feel that Hiroko’s unique achievement, or rather the achievement of “Good Nun, Wonderful Seed”, as she is now called, can best be epitomised by citing the way she would listen to her friends, each and every one of them, with humble and sincere concentration. It must have been from seeing how Hiroko planted the seeds of inner peace, pure faith and spiritual awareness on British soil by her way of listening to others, that Ven. Takehara so generously chose for her the Buddhist name, “Shakyamuni’s Disciple, Good Nun, Wonderful Seed”. Reflecting on this fact, all I can do now is pronounce the Nenbutsu with deepest gratitude for the vast ocean of profound insight with which Amida Tathāgata and good teachers have always been watching and protecting us, ignorant beings that we are.

I myself was taken by complete surprise to discover that one who attains birth in the Pure Land reveals their Buddha-Nature (their true nature) only after becoming white bones. I, an ignorant person, was largely unaware of Hiroko’s Buddha-Nature, that is to say, of the true nature of her being. But seeing the way Hiroko’s face became instantly suffused with joy when the wife of the Head Priest of Shogyoji flew from Japan to visit her on her deathbed and witnessing Ven. Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji, graciously conducting a very dignified, pure and wonderful funeral ceremony for Hiroko here in the United Kingdom, I was able for the very first time to see and revere my wife as a Bodhisattva who had appeared from the other shore in order to guide and protect me.

All the manifold workings of the Dharma on this special occasion must have emanated from the “hidden” Buddha or the formless truth of the Buddha-kaya-in-itself, made manifest in order to save us ignorant beings. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Buddha for his great, unconditional love that continues to pursue, grasp and embrace even those who try to run away.

Though this is a rather more private matter, I have to say it was a great consolation to me that just before Hiroko died I was able to show her the completed version of my new English book, *Living with Thanks - Five Fascicle Version of Rennyō Shonin’s Letters*, for my wife had been one of the most ardent attendees at the original meetings to read *The Letters by Rennyō*. Indeed, not only in the case of this English translation of Buddhist scriptures, but in all the other projects developed at Three Wheels under the leadership of Prof. John White, Hiroko would listen to our explanations very carefully and with deep concentration. Hiroko always understood the matter in hand and cooperated fully in carrying out those projects. In his farewell address, Prof. White said that, without her understanding and help, nothing would have been accomplished.

Concerned as to how I envisaged conducting my life from now on, Ven. Takehara kindly suggested that I might consider returning to my original intention of practising as a Buddhist monk. Whatever I do, I would like to continue on the single path of the Nenbutsu, listening to those around me with all the resolution of a novice monk.

Dharma Lord Koken Otani of the Higashi Honganji tradition has likewise graciously encouraged me with his kind words, “Continue to go forward to the very end like your teacher, D. T. Suzuki.” I would like to respond to all this love and compassion, urging me onwards with no time to stagnate in sadness, with the promise to continue to work for world

peace and the promotion of the Buddha-Dharma.

Last but not least, may I convey to you all my deepest gratitude for your very generous offerings made with such loving kindness and which I would like to put towards promoting the Buddha-Dharma. Thank you very much for your understanding and for allowing me to do so.

Humbly and respectfully

**Kemmyo Taira Sato**

## “The Dharma is Transmitted Through People” The 142nd London Eza

Mrs Sanae Ishii, residents, and visiting Dharma-friends worked hard on Saturday morning to prepare for the London Eza. By 1pm the temple was clean and beautiful and the Shrine Room full to capacity. Rev. Ishii spoke briefly to explain that the service would not only be a time of mourning, but more importantly an opportunity to express our love and gratitude to Mrs Hiroko Sato (Hiroko-san) for what she had done for us. The service then followed, during which everyone present took turns to offer incense in front of the Buddha-shrine.

The original intention for the 142nd London Eza was for the Dharma-friends who went on pilgrimage to Japan to report on their trip, and this plan was honoured in accordance with Hiroko-san’s wishes. Mr Andrew Webb explained that the main focus of the pilgrimage was the important ceremony at Shogyoji to mark the enshrinement of the “Image of the Three Honoured Ones Within a Single Aura of Light” (known as the *Ikko Sanzon Butsu*) in the new Taking-Refuge Round Hall. The meaning of the *Ikko Sanzon Butsu* is explained in Ven. Chimyo Takehara’s article in a recent Three Wheels Newsletter: “Why this Buddha image is known as the hidden Buddha would appear to be because of Prince Shōtoku’s conviction that only the Buddha of Dharma-body, being completely formless, could be called the true Buddha, not the Response-body or the Transformation-body. One who sees the Buddha working out of the truth of formlessness can be called a person of Mahayana spirituality.”

Mr Webb said that it was Hiroko-san’s deep wish that the pilgrimage participants encounter Ven. Takehara’s intention in holding the ceremony. Mr Webb said that when Dharma-friends arrived at Shogyoji at night, tired from their journey, they found that Ven. Takehara and many Shogyoji followers were waiting to greet them in front of the new shrine, which had been specially illuminated for the occasion. “Our whole experience [of the pilgrimage] was contained in the welcome we received from Ven. Takehara and the words he gave to us on the meaning of the *Ikko Sanzon Butsu*.” Listening to Mr Webb, it was easy to see that the welcome Hiroko-san always extended to visitors to Three Wheels is an extension of the “Great Welcome of the Buddha,” which Goinge-sama teaches us is always reverberating throughout the world. Rev. Ishii also spoke of how the “hidden” or formless dimension

of the *Ikko Sanzon Butsu* can teach us to see how Hiroko-san is still working for us all as the foundation of Three Wheels.



**Mrs Yukiko Kinugawa and Rev. Emmyo Sato**

The other members of the pilgrimage journey then shared their own impressions of various activities such as a calligraphy lesson, moving visits to the memorial for Dharma mother Ekai-in, Hiroshima, the D.T. Suzuki Museum and sites associated with Rennyo Shonin. They also spoke of the incredible hospitality and embrace that they received from Dharma-friends wherever they went, in Fukuoka, Kyoto, Osaka and beyond. [Editor’s note: you can read extracts from these impressions later on in this Newsletter].

Following these reports there was a small amount of time to hear people’s impressions. Hiroko-san’s children Rev. Emmyo Sato and Mrs Yukiko Kinugawa described how they had met their mother in a new way during their time at Three Wheels. Rev. Emmyo said that it had led him to understand the terms “All-Buddhas” and the “omnipresence of the Tathagata” in a new dimension.

Finally, Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato spoke to express his thanks to everyone and announced, with deep gratitude, that Ven. Chimyo Takehara had given Mrs Hiroko Sato the very special, posthumous Dharma Name “Disciple of Shakyamuni, Good Nun, Wonderful Seed”.

**Andy B**

## Our Pilgrimage to Japan

*On Thursday 8th November, a small group of Dharma-friends, left London to join a very special ceremony at Shogyoji Temple for the enshrining of a new Buddha-image known as the “Three Honoured One’s Appearing within One Single Aura of Light”, inside the recently constructed “Taking-Refuge Round Shrine”. In total they spent 11 days in Japan returning to London on 20th November 2018. Four days were spent at Shogyoji and the rest on a pilgrimage to some sites of special religious significance, as well as meeting Dharma-friends at the Kasugayama, Kyoto and Osaka branches of Shogyoji. Here are some of the impressions given by the participants on their return to London.*

Our journey around Japan was filled each day with memorable and spiritual experiences that I am sure will stay with me for a very long time. I think I really learned the true meaning and importance of Sangha. On a small scale, the group of us that had travelled from Three Wheels in London, led by Rev. Kenshin Ishii, grew noticeably closer as the journey went on. They are all such great people and they each contributed in different ways to making it a special journey. But beyond that, meeting the wider Sangha at each of the Shogyoji temples was a really moving experience. Everyone made us feel so comfortable and welcome, and at times the kindness that we were shown was almost overwhelming. It made me realise all the hard work that everyone at Shogyoji puts into everything that they do, which inspires me to try to work harder for the Sangha here in London as well. The first time we said *Nenbutsu* in the Buddha hall, as part of the amazing ceremony, I was deeply moved. I spent the rest of the journey excited to have the opportunity to say the *Nenbutsu* with others at the different temples, and even after returning to London, I can still feel much more emotion even when saying the *Nenbutsu* alone in my daily practice. It is as if during that first day in the Buddha hall of Shogyoji, a flame was lit inside me, and happily, it still continues to burn.

### **Christopher Duxbury**

Everyone at Shogyoji welcomed us with extreme kindness from the very first moment we visited the temple till the very last moment when we left. They must have been extremely busy with the preparations for the ceremony and I felt so overwhelmed by the very warm welcome they gave us. I can never forget the experience of the first evening, seeing the beautiful image of the illuminated wooden shrine that they kindly showed us and how peaceful and calm the air in Shogyoji itself was. Over three days I had opportunities to talk to many Dharma-friends at Shogyoji. By talking to them the image of Shogyoji and the connection between Shogyoji and Three Wheels became more vivid and clear inside me. I felt I was able to experience the big illuminating circle that Three Wheels is part of and that broadened my perception of what Sangha is. The Sangha that I am allowed to be part of at Three Wheels is included in the large beautiful Sangha which is supported by Shogyoji. It was an amazing experience to be able to see and feel it.

### **Kei Suzuki**

Generally speaking the one thing that I remember from

our journey was the incredible welcome and kindness that I received from Ven. Chimyo Takehara, and in fact from everyone from the first moment we arrived at Shogyoji. I was unhesitatingly accepted as one of the Sangha and received such warmth from everyone I met throughout my entire stay. After leaving Shogyoji we were able to visit many wonderful places including Yoshizaki where Rennyō Shōnin built a temple. Following Rev. Kenshin Ishii, I was able to read out in English one of the Letters by Rennyō relating to Yoshizaki. It was an experience that I will cherish forever. Here, as well as in Yamashina, I was able to feel a great sense of peace and joy, and again was able to say thank you to Rennyō Shōnin. Being there, I could imagine Rennyō’s disciple Doshu, undeterred by the harsh conditions, trudging his way through the deep snow to be with his master.

### **Chris Dodd**

The whole Shogyoji stay was very special, as I felt integrated and part of the community. I felt quite emotional when we departed from Shogyoji, as everyone waved us off. We were fortunate enough to have been introduced to shodō (Japanese calligraphy) through a master class on the subject by Master Zuiko Sensei. I must admit that it was initially challenging to learn how to do the brush strokes, especially in a language that was foreign to me and one that I have never studied. I was given the task of writing ‘light’ in Japanese symbols, which was fascinating, as what was presented as a very simple flick of the brush by our experienced tutor was a bit more complex than what I originally thought. However, by the end of the session I was able to turn a white piece of paper into what some may describe a ‘work of art’ or at least that is what I believed it to be. I felt very welcomed by everyone that I came into contact with during the whole of my stay in Japan.

### **Tina Slevin**

After arriving in Hiroshima and enjoying lunch, we walked to the Atomic Bomb Dome and Peace Park. The dome was the only building left standing after the bomb had gone off. I began to get a real understanding of the complete devastation that had occurred. I felt tears begin to form in my eyes for all the innocent people who had lost their lives on that terrible day, and our group stood silently unable to find any words to say to try and make sense of what had happened. We moved on slowly to a Peace Monument for the victims and we stood with palms together to pay our respects. We then had the opportunity to ring the Peace Bell which resonated

for what seemed like minutes after it was struck. I prayed that a terrible event like this would never happen again and that man's destructive nature would see how pointless it was to go to war. This day confirmed the importance of the Reconciliation Ceremony at Three Wheels. For me, it is not only about bringing people together for forgiveness but also remembering the futility of war and making sure our voices are heard and actions result in ensuring a peaceful world. It is so important.

**Liz Barr**



**Participants after a Japanese Calligraphy Class**

## Ceremony to Pray for World Peace and Reconciliation The 140<sup>th</sup> London Eza

This year's Ceremony to Pray for World Peace and Reconciliation, held on the occasion of the 140th London Eza, was yet again a profoundly moving and thought-provoking event in which we received vivid reminders of the horrors of human conflict together with the inspiration and life-affirming energy to do whatever we can to promote peace and reconciliation, both in our lifetimes and for future generations. It was a humbling experience to be able to join the assembled dignitaries and guests of Three Wheels who had gathered for the memorial service to commemorate those who had died in the Second World War and also the ex-servicemen, now sadly departed, who had given so much to the peace and reconciliation movement.

This year Three Wheels paid special tribute to the late Mr Bill Smyly, former serviceman and member of The Burma Star Association who passed away this year at the age of 95, who contributed greatly to previous meetings at Three Wheels. Three Wheels was very happy to be joined by Mr Smyly's wife, Mrs Diana Smyly and daughter Ms Eleanor Smyly who made the long journey from Bedford to join the Eza.

Mr Tomohiro Mikanagi, Political Minister of the Embassy of Japan in London prefaced the memorial service with an address in which he paid tribute to the great efforts that had been made to reconcile British and Japanese war veterans and which led to the long series of peace and reconciliation meetings that have been held at Three Wheels since 1997.



**Mr Tomohiro Mikanagi**

Following the memorial service led by Rev. Sato, we heard the chanting of sutras by monks from the Myanmar Buddhist Sangha and the Nipponzan Myohoji Temple and a lay representative of the Shobo-an Zen centre and Fairlight Zen Buddhist Temple. Rev. Dr. Thomas Plant of Lichfield Cathedral then gave an insightful address in which he touched on a paradox at the heart of interfaith dialogue, namely how to respect and value other religious traditions whilst at the same time engaging in religious activities which stress the uniqueness and importance of your own.

Rev. Kemmyo Sato gave a poignant talk of thanks in memory of the late Mr Bill Smyly in which he began by quoting a teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha that was especially apt in the atmosphere of friendship and peacefulness pervading the day's meeting: "Having good friends, being together with them and surrounded by them, is not half of the pure practice but the whole of the pure practice."

Later in his talk Rev. Sato recalled how Mr Masao Hirakubo, father of the Reconciliation Movement, used to remark that he was living a life given to him by others. Rev. Sato felt Mr Bill Smyly expressed exactly the same awareness, namely that, "His life was a gift and he tried to pass on this peaceful awareness both of his own finite existence and of the unconditional love he received from others". Rev. Sato continued, "It was this profound awareness he possessed that gave rise to his remarkable pronouncement that he would like to be reconciled with the Japanese people before he died". Rev. Sato then expressed his deepest gratitude to the late Mr Smyly for his spirit of forgiveness.

After opening the meeting to comments from the guests attending the Eza we first heard from Mrs Akiko Macdonald, Chair of the Burma Campaign Society. Mrs Macdonald also paid tribute to Mr Smyly and recalled an email correspondence she had received from him in which he described some of the most harrowing wartime experiences he had undergone on the battlefield in Burma. It really brought home the suffering and terrible circumstances which were forced upon both the combatants and civilian population of Burma in the war.

Mrs Phillida Purvis, Secretary of the International Friendship

and Reconciliation Trust emphasised how much more work needed to be done to prevent even more conflicts occurring in an increasingly unstable world. Prof. John White commented that war is very stupidly and all too easily glorified by society today in ignorance of the suffering that results from it. We were also very grateful to hear from Mr Richard Pe Win, a senior representative of the Myanmar Buddhist Society, who had done so much to bring together people from the Myanmar community in the UK with the Reconciliation Movement.

Rev. Kenshin Ishii recalled the words given by Ven. Takehara at this year's Summer Training Assembly at Shogyoji Temple. He taught how Amida Buddha, through his Original Vow of great compassion, which saves us even though we have committed grave transgressions in the past, strongly deters us from committing them again in the future. In the same way, the forgiveness shown by the war veterans to their past enemies also teaches us that we should strive not to fight one another in the future.

The conversations continued long into the late afternoon and it was wonderful to witness the joyful working of the spirit of



**The late Mr Bill Smyly**

peace and reconciliation among the participants of this very special London Eza, a meeting which is a great gift to us from the sadly departed founders of the Movement.

**Andrew Webb**

## **“What Makes Us Aware” The 22nd Shokai Retreat**

“Life is a gift,” one Dharma friend said at the last meeting of the 22nd Shokai and “Namu Amida-butsu,” immediately rose up from the Sangha’s hearts in response. After more than a decade many Shokai participants have known each other a very long time and have witnessed each other maturing, ageing, going through many struggles and joyful awakenings. Two days earlier at the opening meeting, Dharma brothers Mr Sam Kelly and Mr Duncan Kennedy, who as parents and grandparents have many family responsibilities, were reunited after a long space of time and embraced saying, “My dear friend”, “My old friend”. Everybody could feel the happiness of those two, as well as their own pleasure at being in the Sangha.

On Friday and Saturday we held several reflective group meetings (*zadankai*) where we each shared a personal question and then listened to follow-up questions from Dharma friends. This process was quite new for most of us and we realised that knowing how to ask good questions, without colouring them with our own ideas, was very difficult. For those of us who have experienced an introspection session (*chomon*) it made us recognise how skilful the people who were our advisors were with their own questions.

Due to our inexperience and each person’s individual karma the groups progressed quite differently but by the second day everyone had had a chance to share their question and to receive questions from their Dharma friends. Several common themes emerged, in particular “how can I get rid of the gap between how I want to be and how I actually behave.” On the final day of the retreat everyone shared their impressions of the *zadankai* meetings together and I was extremely moved and impressed by the deep introspection of my friends and felt that my own attitude to the retreat had been extremely

lazy in comparison.

Rev. Ishii’s talk was the pivotal aspect of the retreat. Actually Rev. Ishii’s talk had three parts; his formal prepared talk, his free comments afterwards, and finally his deep introspection and repentance expressed on the final day of the retreat. Listening to the first two parts everyone had a great opportunity to reflect on the theme of the retreat, “Taking refuge in the midst of daily life” and look into themselves more deeply.

At the closing meeting Dharma-friends shared many wonderful and profound expressions which are unfortunately too many to report here. Personally I was very moved to witness my Dharma-brother Mr Andrew Webb’s re-encounter with his master Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato, which also profoundly refreshed my own relationship to our teacher. Mr Webb said that he had recently written to Sensei saying that he couldn’t do something he had been asked to do, however he now realised that his attitude was completely wrong in making excuses first and cutting off his teacher’s pure mind. Mr Webb said that if we lose our attitude of respect then everything else unravels and there can be no taking refuge in daily life without that respect.

I was also very impressed by the words of one Dharma-friend who said, “I thought the question I brought to Shokai was quite trivial and mundane but Dharma-friends answered me very directly and practically. Hearing their response I feel that my tendency to dismiss myself is actually a kind of ego. Doing yourself down seems humble but is a kind of self-obsession.”

After listening to all the Dharma friends impressions Rev.

Sato concluded our final meeting by sharing the following words:

“This morning I am feeling the soft and pure light of the Sangha. I am very much relieved and feel confidence about the future of Three Wheels. Thank you to everyone for what you have done for us.

You have all been discussing the gap you feel between daily life and when you stay at Three Wheels. Certainly there is a gap as you feel. But you have felt such a gap in coming to Three Wheels. You can feel a gap because there is something illuminating that gap beyond duality, something great. What is it? ... The great compassion of the Buddha, or you can say the Sangha which is a manifestation of the pure Buddha body.

Thich Nhat Hanh has said, “if there is a Buddha in the world there is a Sangha.” Goinge-sama doesn’t say he is Buddha, but for us Three Wheels was made by his pure prayer for the attainment of inner peace of all people in this world.

Looking into myself, even in Three Wheels I find I am full of complaints but they are illumined by the Sangha. I feel very sorry and embraced by the people around me and so grateful.

Don’t worry about your problems. The most important thing is to become aware of them, and when you become aware of them, you will become aware of what makes you aware.”

**Andy B**



**The participants of the 22nd Shokai Retreat**

## “Emptiness and Gratitude”

### The 141st London Eza

Following the close of the 22nd Shokai retreat the participants gathered, along with around ten additional guests, to pay respects to Shinran Shonin through the annual *Hoonko Otorikoshi* ceremony. Although the gathering was relatively small for a London Eza, the atmosphere was bright and warm, and the chanting strong and supple, supported by the youthful voices of the teenagers and young children.

Following the service, Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato gave a talk on the subject of Emptiness and Gratitude. Rev. Sato said that, due to editorial work, he only had two days in which to prepare the talk but that, nonetheless, he had been reflecting on the contents for over fifty years. In that sense, he noted, the talk represented only “the visible tip of an iceberg”.

In the talk Rev. Sato first explained the relationship between early Buddhism’s teaching on the twelve-linked chain of dependent origination and the Mahayana philosophy of Emptiness. With regard to the former he noted that the critical relationship is between consciousness (subject), and name-and-form (object), which arise co-dependently and exist like two rush bundles, where if one falls then so does the other. The relationship between consciousness and name-and-form is therefore like an “empty of essence” keystone which upholds the production of the whole chain of our apparent but illusory “reality”. Later Mahayana Buddhism, Rev. Sato added, applied this awareness to the apparent contents of the universe in order to clarify their “mutual interfusion with no impediment”.

Rev. Sato pointed out that personally realising the truth of Emptiness, or the co-dependent nature of reality, entails



**Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato**

becoming aware of all that upholds our existence, or all that has been done for us. On coming to this realisation, we cannot help but feel filled with immense and overflowing gratitude. It is from this overflow of gratitude that we wish to make offerings to others and to the Buddha.

Bearing this in mind, Rev. Sato noted that the name of our temple, Three Wheels (Jp. *Sanrin Shoja*), chosen by Prof. White and Ven. Chimyo Takehara, and taken from a phrase in an Emptiness-themed sutra, refers to the relationship between Emptiness, gratitude and offering. As Prof. White’s poem, framed on the wall of Three Wheels, expresses it: “If the Gift itself is pure / given solely / for the giving, / without thought / of reward or return,” then the giver, receiver and gift freely become one another and “out of diversity / unity and harmony / are born.” Later, Mr Duncan Kennedy commented that this part of Kemmyo-sensei’s talk “pointed directly” to

his experience during the Shokai retreat when he asked a question and Mrs Hiroko Sato immediately gave him back another question which struck him “like a thunder bolt”, and made him look much deeper within himself.

Rev. Sato’s talk was very profound and hard to fully understand, but many of us felt that he was pointing us back to the original founding prayer of the Three Wheels Sangha as expressed by Ven. Chimyo Takehara, and manifested in the encounters between Mr Kenji Toda, Prof. John White, Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato, and many other people of various nationalities and backgrounds down to the present day. It could be said in fact that the 141st London Eza marked a thoroughgoing refreshment of the Shogyoji Dharma movement in the United Kingdom.

On this theme, Andy remarked that usually new Three Wheels Dharma friends begin to participate in the practice of the Sangha either through the Monday meditation class, or through joining the Sunday morning service to Amida Buddha. If their practice and faith develops, usually these people eventually come together as one stream at the biannual Shokai retreat. Andy said that these two “gateways” to the Sangha could be said to correspond to Zen (Meditation School) and Pure Land (*Nenbutsu* School), or Emptiness and Gratitude. First Patriarch Nagarjuna’s emphasis on the co-dependent interrelationship and unity of Emptiness and Gratitude, further brought out and clarified by Shinran Shonin, can therefore be seen to be a living reality on this small island of ours.

In conclusion, it does not seem an exaggeration to say that the 141st London Eza and the 22nd Shokai were like a sort of silent thunderclap which shook the dust from our eyes and showed us, briefly, Amida’s Buddha-field. This was vividly reflected in the words of Mrs Hiroko Sato who said, “Everything is so very fresh and new as if I am attending for the first time. Thank you for allowing me to join you. I live in my own world, taking everything for granted, not noticing so much, and only when unexpected things happen do I notice. I have no choice to live in such an unstable world but through being in Sangha I can see each person shining in their own colours, coming here for me.”

“Each person shining in their own colours, coming here for me,” must surely be a vision of the Bodhisattvas return or All-Buddha’s praising Amida’s Name. Meeting this shining reality, another participant said, “It is so magical. You are like magical people.” Rev. Sato described this wonderful and inconceivable reality in the conclusion of his talk:

“On awakening to Amida’s great compassion, that vows to save all sentient beings without any discrimination, despite our irredeemable karma, we are simply impelled with whole-hearted repentance to follow his call, the command of unconditional love. Then, at that very moment we take refuge in Amida Buddha, we will find ourselves surrounded and protected by good friends, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, in the Dharma-world of interdependent mutual fusion with no obstruction.”

Andy B

## “How Wonderful!” The 143rd London Eza

The 143rd London Eza was held on 24th February. Everything went smoothly in spite of the fact that Rev. and Mrs Sato were both absent from the Eza for the first time. Dharma friends, not only at Three Wheels but also in Japan, conveyed their warmest wishes and support to Rev. Kenshin Hiroshi Ishii and Mrs Sanae Ishii on holding this London Eza.

Rev. Ishii gave a dharma talk entitled *The Working of Amida Shown Through People Around Me*. First of all, Rev. Ishii introduced “The omnipresence of the Tathagata (Buddha)” which is one of the most important teachings of Ven. Chimyo Takehara, the head priest of Shogyoji temple. Rev. Ishii then told us about a conversation between Rev. Sato and a lady who attended a meeting at Three Wheels. “How and when can we feel Amida Buddha’s working, especially if we do not have a background in Buddhism?”, the lady had asked. Rev. Sato immediately answered, “Whenever you feel wonderful, that is the time that you are embraced by Amida’s working.” This dialogue struck a deep chord with Rev. Ishii who felt that his answer to the question would be that, “I experience Amida’s working as radical changes in my own perspective”. Focusing on this theme, Rev. Ishii talked about one of his own past changes of perspective, and also shared some recent notable experiences of Dharma-friends which Rev. Ishii felt were similarly “Wonderful”.

Rev. Ishii shared a letter written by Mr Chris Dodd to Ven.



Rev. Kenshin Hiroshi Ishii

Chimyo Takehara, in which he related his spiritual encounter with the late Mrs Hiroko Sato (Hiroko-san) who passed away only a few months ago. In this letter Mr Dodd wrote:

“Because of my blindness, I could not see Amida Buddha’s compassion embracing me, but when I think of Hiroko-san, it is easy to see it working through her. When I visited Shogyoji, Ven. Takehara told us Buddhism can only be transmitted through people and to be honest I really didn’t understand. But through coming to know Hiroko-san I think I now know. Hiroko-san

taught me more than anybody. Through her kindness I am finally starting to be able to say the *Nenbutsu* with gratitude for all that has been done for me. When I saw her in hospital, she told me that we would meet again in the Pure Land and I believe her. Now I really do have the incentive to want to be born there.”

Rev. Ishii expressed how impressed he was by Mr. Dodd’s state of mind and explained how Hiroko-san’s words, uttered with sincerity, joy and gratitude, turned Mr. Dodd’s suffering loss into gratitude. The awareness and change in perspective which was given to Mr Dodd was surely a manifestation of the illuminating working of Amida Buddha.

Rev. Ishii also shared a part of a letter from Ms Kei Suzuki in which she wrote: “Mrs Sato always welcomed me with a wonderful smile and warmth, She taught me a lot of things. I learned the importance of looking into myself especially in the time of suffering in life. Thanks to her, I gradually began to realise how ignorant I was. She accepted my whole existence like my own mother and she was like a bodhisattva of wisdom and compassion. I am sure that she will be alive within me and I will continue to learn from her.”

Rev. Ishii commented how Ms Suzuki was illumined by Amida Buddha’s wisdom and compassion which she received through her encounter with Mrs. Sato. The awareness Ms Suzuki expressed of Amida Buddha’s love and compassion and the reality of her own karmic existence is itself a wonderful gift from Amida Buddha, Rev. Ishii added.

Rev. Ishii concluded his talk by emphasising that what we felt through our experience of the immense loss of Mrs Sato was a gift from the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We felt Amida’s working through the changes we witnessed in our Dharma-friends at Three Wheels. If we try to listen to others, the wonderful words of gratitude we receive can shift our

perspective from a self-centred one to a non-attached one, from a hating one to a loving one. When our spiritual eyes are opened in this way, the words of gratitude we hear become words of wisdom to us. If we become full of gratitude we feel at that moment that everything has been inconceivably given to us, far beyond our self-centred way of thinking, and we cannot help but say, “How wonderful.”

Responding to Rev. Ishii’s talk, Mr Sam Kelly reflected on his own encounter with Rev. Sato in which he found himself unable to fully accept the spiritual advice Rev. Sato gave to him because of his own doubt. Hearing Rev. Ishii’s talk, Mr Kelly felt that through receiving Rev. Sato’s advice he had been illumined by Amida Buddha’s working. This had shown him the direction to take in solving a particularly difficult problem in his life.

We welcomed Mr Kyota Takada to the London Eza for the first time. He had come to stay at Three Wheels for two months to organise the upcoming Spring School for young Japanese students. After Mr Takada expressed his determination to do his best for the Spring School preparations, he was strongly applauded by the audience.

To conclude this report I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Three Wheels for the light that has been given to me through the Sangha. The loss of Mrs Hiroko Sato made me realise how little responsibility I took in the Sangha and how much I depended on her. Now I can see how Rev. Sato and Rev. and Mrs Ishii have become one, working harder than ever after Mrs Sato’s departure. Having witnessed this, I feel I am given a new and stronger incentive to listen to the Buddha Dharma and to go forward together with all my Dharma-friends.

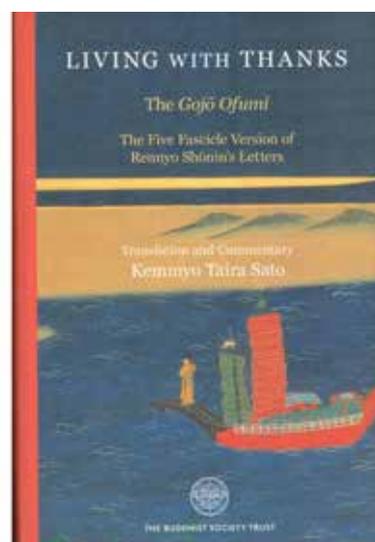
**Mako Webb**

## Book Review

Three Wheels is very pleased to announce the long-awaited publication of *Living with Thanks - The Five Fascicle Version of Rennyō Shōnin’s Letters* by Kemmyō Taira Sato and *5-7-5 The Haiku of Bashō* by John White and Kemmyō Taira Sato. Both are published by The Buddhist Society Trust in hardback and copies are available to purchase directly from Three Wheels.

*Living with Thanks* is a translation of the Five Fascicle Version of the Letters of Rennyō Shonin, the Eighth Head Priest of Honganji, by Rev. Kemmyō Taira Sato. Each chapter contains a translation of a single letter, followed by Rev. Sato’s commentary and explanation on the text. The Letters were written, in many cases, as responses to particular questions put to Rennyō Shonin by his followers. In this way, the letters provide clarity to many of the questions that Shin Buddhist practitioners commonly experience along the way within their practice. They seem just as relevant today as when they were written over 500 years ago. In particular, I found it useful to be reminded that in order to achieve birth in the Pure Land, we must put

our trust completely in Amida Buddha and not be led astray through believing that particular practices or knowledge will lead us there. Because the Letters were not written



with the explicit intention of collecting them together as a single book, there is an element of repetition in some of them. However, I think that this repetition is important, because it applies to fundamental teachings which we can benefit from hearing numerous times, in slightly different contexts. Also, Rev. Sato's commentary is varied, giving each chapter a very unique feel, even where the Letters cover similar subject matter.

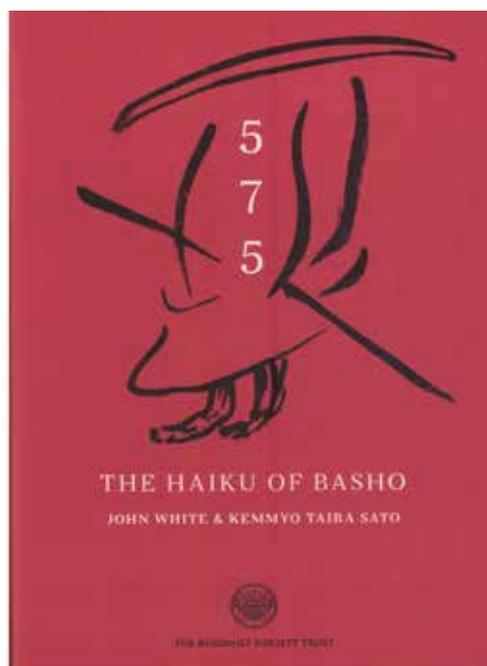
The book itself has been beautifully produced, including illustrations documenting Rennyō Shōnin's life, examples of his original calligraphy and even a map of Japan as it was during the time that the Letters were written. I have heard it said that all the key teachings of Shin Buddhism are contained within the Letters and to have them gathered in such a beautifully bound and well finished volume feels like a real treat. The translations themselves are very clear with a nice flowing style of English. It is difficult to imagine how much work must have gone into producing such an extensive and thorough work.

*Living with Thanks* has vastly improved my understanding of Shin Buddhism. Having read it once from cover to cover, I now feel that it is a book that I will often dip into, in order to keep my focus on the important things as I walk the Buddhist path. In fact, as the book contains such a wealth of knowledge about Shin Buddhism, I feel that if I owned only one book on the subject, this would be it. I can imagine that even if I continue to refer to it for the rest of my life, I will continue to learn from it. Overall, it's a wonderful book and I am very grateful to Rev. Sato for putting so much hard work into creating it.

*5-7-5 The Haiku of Bashō* is a book with translations of 300 haiku of Matsuo Bashō. As with *Living with Thanks*, the book is beautifully presented with one haiku per page, first in the traditional Japanese script followed by Romaji (Japanese written phonetically in English script) for pronunciation and then the English translation. It is important to note that these are not just word for word translations. Great care has been taken to ensure that the resulting translations follow the haiku structure and maintain a poetic quality.

As this was my first real exposure to Japanese haiku, I wasn't sure how to approach reading the book in order to extract the greatest enjoyment. I decided that, rather than reading cover to cover in a few sittings, I would take just one haiku per day and read it several times over after my morning Buddhist practice. I read each one slowly and try to picture the subject of the haiku in my mind. For me, this gives me a chance to really focus on the content and give

each haiku the attention that it deserves. Taken in this way, the beautiful translations really come alive. I feel that I can see something beyond just the simple text and glimpse something of the deeper meaning behind the words. I can feel that Bashō was really seeing the world deeply, and in turn great effort has been made by the translators to maintain this depth. As the book's introduction says, "Everything he wrote was imbued with his intensely felt Buddhist faith". I even find myself on occasion looking at nature and the scenery around me and noticing things for the first time that I would surely have missed prior to enjoying these haiku.



I understand that the authors are intending to complete further translations of the haiku of Issa and Buson. I look forward to having the opportunity to enjoy these in the same way and fully intend to maintain my new practice of a morning haiku long into the future. I think that this book would make a wonderful addition to the library of anyone interested in Buddhism, poetry or Eastern culture more generally.

out of a treetop  
it was emptiness that fell;  
a cicada shell

**Christopher Duxbury**

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*Editors' Note.*

*For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to provide material for inclusion, please contact Three Wheels Temple.*

*Edited and created by the Three Wheels Editorial Committee.*

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