



Three Wheels NEWS



London Shogyoji Trust

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'The Sangha of Peaceful Awareness' The 124th London Eza

On the afternoon of Sunday 6th December the 124th London Eza was held. As always upon entering Three Wheels we received a very warm welcome and were instantly made to feel comfortable and at ease. The service led by Reverend Kemmyo Sato and Reverend Kenshin Ishii was very strong and powerful, and created a very positive and harmonious atmosphere for the whole Eza.

After the service Mr Andrew Webb once again warmly welcomed everyone to Three Wheels and introduced Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato who gave a talk on his recent visit to Japan. Rev. Sato said that the main purpose of his visit had been to interpret a talk given by Prof. John White while in Kagoshima. This was one of a series of recent big events to commemorate 150 years since the first Japanese students had come to the U.K. and how they had been welcomed by Prof. and Mrs Alexander William Williamson and taken care of with such loving kindness.

Rev. Sato said how much he had enjoyed his stay at Shogyoji, and how impressed he was by the current conditions of the Sangha there, which he called the 'Sangha of peaceful awareness'. He said that at Shogyoji, each individual is aware of the reality of their karmic existence (*ki*) and also aware of Amida's unconditional love that embraces them (*ho*). Even though problems sometimes arise in the community, by returning to *ki* and *ho* they solve their own problems and encourage others to do so. Rev. Sato said that his master Venerable Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple, had told him how important it was to become aware of *ki* in the light of the Buddha-Dharma.

Mr Andrew Webb then read out a talk by Venerable Chimyo Takehara in response to two very important subjects brought up by Prof. John White. He talked about the need for there to be encounters between the individual followers at Shogyoji, where the pure Shin Buddhist faith is practised, and the Sangha at Three Wheels, in order for the Buddha Dharma to flourish here in the U.K. He talked about the need for constantly renewed follower to follower contact, and that only through these encounters could true faith continue to flourish at Three Wheels. Precisely because of this, we were extremely lucky to have attending

the Eza, Mr Michiaki Konya, and his wife Toako, with the specific purpose of promoting spiritual exchange between Dharma friends in Japan and the U.K.

The other subject was the translation into English of The *Letters* by Rennyō Shōnin. These are read every morning and evening during service and are of fundamental importance in understanding the essentials of Shin Buddhism. An English translation of these letters will be of vital importance and benefit to the Sangha in the U.K. and an event to be much anticipated.



Mr Michiaki Konya and Mrs Toako Konya

Mr Michiaki Konya and Mrs Toako Konya then introduced themselves. It was very humbling to meet two followers who are so sincere and who showed so much gratitude. It was easy to see the true faith that they had brought with them from Japan, and to remind us of how much Three Wheels owes to them and everyone at Shogyoji Temple.

Afterwards some impressions were given by members of the Sangha, all agreeing that it is only by contact with Shogyoji that Three Wheels can be a place to sincerely listen to the Buddha-Dharma, and that it is vitally important to have that contact with Shin Buddhism.

Rev. Kenshin Ishii then went on to show us two videos that were made at Shogyoji about Rennyō Shōnin. They were in Japanese but English subtitles were translated by the

students here at Three Wheels. It took a lot of hard work. But finally, after Rev. Ishii and Mrs Kaori Punwani had explained more, they could fully understand and do the translation perfectly.

Both the videos were very moving and brought tears to several eyes. Rennyō Shonin showed such warmth and understanding to his followers, as well as his great wisdom in helping others comprehend the Buddha Dharma. It made us think that when things are not going so well on the spiritual path, we should not be too downhearted, just to trust in Other-power and Amida Buddha, and to say the Nembutsu. The honesty and sincerity of the characters was very humbling. After the videos many people made

comments about them and said how everyone had been very impressed by them.

Rev. Kenshin Ishii then talked about the new Three Wheels website that is now up and running. This has been updated and modernised and is looking better than ever. He explained some of the new features that are available and mentioned the addition of some more pages. Then it was time to socialise and relax, with plenty of good food and drink, and with the special treat of the entertainments being laid on by the student members of the Sangha.

Chris Dodd

A Greeting by Mr Michiaki Konya

Good afternoon! My name is Michiaki Konya. I am living at Shogyoji temple in Japan and working as a receptionist at the temple office greeting visitors and guests.

Needless to say, however, my most important activity in daily life is to attend morning and evening services at the temple each and every day.

When Prof. John White visited Shogyoji Temple at the beginning of November, he said to Venerable Chimyo Takehara, the head priest of Shogyoji, "Although the name of Three Wheels is now recognized in the U.K., it will be only through encounters between individual followers from Japan and the U.K. that the pure Shin Buddhist faith practiced at Shogyoji will continue to flourish at Three Wheels."

On receiving Prof. White's words, Venerable Chimyo Takehara immediately asked me, "Who among us could go to the U.K.?" I responded to his question by saying, "I will go". Therefore my wife and I are here now.

We have long been taught about the importance of true encounter in daily life in the Sangha. The core of encounter is person to person dialogue. In the context of Shin Buddhism its archetype is found in the encounter between Buddha Lokeshvararaja and Bodhisattva Dharmakara in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*, in which the master and disciple are perfectly united.

Now that Rev. Kemmyō Sato's translation of *The Letters* by Rennyō is soon to be published, Prof. White strongly wished there to be true encounters between individuals which can be realized 'immediately' just like the encounters described in Rennyō's *Letters* between the master and his disciples or between Dharma friends. It is our sincere wish to encounter so many people as possible during our limited stay.

'Surprised by Amida' The 125th London Eza

On a cold, bright February day around 40 people gathered at Three Wheels for the 125th London Eza which began with a service to the Buddha which incorporated memorial observances for Mr John Fison - a descendant of Prof. Alexander William Williamson - who had recently passed away.

Following the service, Ms Sally Haden gave a talk entitled '*Surprised by Amida*'. First of all Ms Haden used a clip from a film about the Choshu Five to illustrate her

fundamental discovery that 'encounter requires courage, and surprise is part of the path'. She then talked about her three 'surprises' which were respectively discovering her family history, Japan, and Amida. She said that her family history 'found her' in the form of a rusty box full of old family photographs which had been discovered buried under a factory floor. While researching these photos she learnt of her great-grandfather, Mr James Speed, who had travelled to Japan in the early Meiji Era (from 1879 to 1883) in order to help pioneer modern Western-style

glass-making. And through researching this family history together with her family, Sally and her brother were drawn closer together than before.



Ms Sally Haden

In the course of her researches Ms Haden fortuitously encountered a Japanese glass enthusiast who invited her to go to Japan and give a talk to a group of glass collectors. With a grant from the Sasakawa Foundation, and advice from Rev. Sato, she was able to make this trip; visiting the site of the glassworks in Shinagawa, Tokyo, where her ancestor had worked, and meeting glassmakers in a direct instruction lineage with the Englishmen - like her great-grandfather - who first taught modern glassmaking in Japan.

While travelling home after this dramatic journey Ms Haden began to feel strangely unsettled. What would she

do now? But when she arrived back in England she found her brother had completed the book that they had worked on together and she realised again how wonderful it was that the work had drawn them together. In addition, looking back on her journey she realised that her experiences were a continuation of something great that her great-grandfather helped to begin. In this spirit she continues to embrace the new encounters that she received in Japan and is now involved in many related projects, including helping a young Japanese glassmaker to market his glass in London.

Ms Haden concluded by saying that she feels that Amida, “that greater wondrous strength of other-power”, is at work in these developments. She said, “When you step out in courage, Amida brings you joy and responsibilities, your work becomes a service... and your troubles and fears become smaller... If you haven’t already, please think about encountering your ancestors, it will bring you bigger visions and vistas.”

Rev. Sato thanked Ms Haden for her talk and congratulated her on the great work of inter-cultural dialogue and discovery she has been developing for over a decade on a sound foundation of spiritual introspection. He expressed his gratitude for all that British people past and present have done for the Japanese people.

Andy B.

‘Our Joy in Listening to the Buddha-Dharma’ The 17th Shokai Retreat and The 126th London Eza

This was our first time the Shokai Retreat had been held immediately prior to the London Eza. At the end of the Shokai, we hoped to share the atmosphere of our retreat with the participants of the London Eza.

As spiritual preparation for the Shokai, themed “My Joy in Listening to the Buddha-Dharma”, we composed our own letters addressed to Rennyō-Shōnin or Amida Buddha. This also formed part of a project entitled “Dear Rennyō-sama“, set by the headquarters of the Higashi Honganji-ha tradition to celebrate the upcoming 600th anniversary of the birth of Rennyō Shōnin.

During the Shokai each of us was given the opportunity to share our letter with the Sangha. Those listening to the letters of their Dharma-friends encountered each other and deepened their understanding of the Dharma teachings in their own way. Rev. Sato guided us with his comments on each letter.

Andrew read out his letter, which brought many friends

to tears. His letter included his deep awareness of his pride; his struggle with the sense of distance between himself and Amida Buddha; his realization that he looks towards Buddha outwardly – as an object far away from him; and his realization of attaining inner peace through taking refuge in Amida Buddha was the same as his late father’s greatest wish, which was to find inner peace.

Rev. Akemi Ishida, who joined the retreat for the first time all the way from New York, expressed her joy at joining the retreat at Three Wheels. Her enthusiasm was eye opening to observe as one who seeks the truth and to learn and absorb from any opportunity possible. After hearing Andrew’s letter, she apologised for what she wrote in her letter. She asked for more guidance and teaching from Rev. Sato and Rev. Ishii. Throughout the session, she was told she could visit and stay at Three Wheels at any time.

Matthew responded saying, having heard Andrew’s letter he realised that his own writing sounds polished but

is a fake and not real. Andrew and Matthew then both confirmed that they were both hesitant to open their minds. The next night, Matthew composed his own letter and shared that with us. His intimate personal letter, with repentance, was like observing one who finally comes out of his small box; truly mind blowing for all of us. This letter was the evidence of the working of Amida Buddha, not one's own work. Matthew was so grateful saying that he could not have written this without his Dharma-friends' help.

Throughout the session, there were many questions, and



Rev. Akemi Ishida

teachings that will stay in everyone's minds. Rev. Sato taught that 'love yourself and love others' is contradictory if we are self-centered, but becomes real when we are freed from self-attachment; that Buddha's unconditional

love appears through other people around you; and doing good originates from taking refuge with repentance in Amida Buddha.

At the London Eza meeting held shortly after the Shokai Retreat closed, Rev. Kenshin Ishii read his own letter to Rennyō Shonin as the main Eza talk. He went through his own history all the way from his birth to his present situation. He highlighted as significant spiritual movements the time he became a Shin Buddhist priest and how he stayed with his family at Three Wheels in London. He quoted one of Rennyō's letter on the "Fivefold Meaning": firstly, the maturity of Karmic good; secondly the encountering of a good teacher; thirdly, awakening to Amida's light; fourthly, attaining faith; fifthly, pronouncing the Name of Amida. Rev. Ishii expressed how grateful he was to have felt the fivefold meaning through his religious experiences.

There were many questions raised and impressions given by participants of the Eza. Through the preparation of our letters, we were able to reveal our inner selves during the Shokai Retreat. Having the Shokai prior to and then leading into the Eza, enabled us to gain settled minds so that we could listen to our Dharma-friends, and feel more open about sharing our feeling at the Eza. This Shokai and London Eza are the truth of the working of Amida Buddha.

Kaori Punwani

'On Illusion' The 127th London Eza

The morning of the 127th London Eza brought a beautiful sunny day, and a number of Dharma friends met in the morning to clean and prepare the building and grounds.

After the service Mr Andrew Webb chaired the meeting, and we welcomed Prof. John White to present his talk 'On Illusion' which he had previously given at Shogyoji Temple. John explained how we are highly subjective and therefore find it difficult to experience ultimate reality. While science can take us so far, many paradoxes can't be explained. We only see a small part of the whole, and common to other animals our senses tend to show us parts of reality and hide other parts. He noted that animals also have incredible abilities. We have the illusion of an enduring self and we are attached to different kinds of clinging and discrimination. One participant noted that when we get closer to something we find it's not quite as we thought, and that while true for objects how much truer for ideas or concepts which we tend to be even more attached to!

Rev. Sato explained how this links to Jodo Shinshu in that we tend to think that we have the right understanding, and



Mrs Lori North from Canada

that while it's an illusion, we find ourselves in the light of Amida Buddha. It's important to know that we don't know, and especially around our categories of good and bad. He reminded us that despite our illusions and misunderstandings, only the Nembutsu is true, as Shinran had pointed out.

We welcomed Lori North from Canada who is the Chair of the Women's Federation of Jodo Shinshu in Canada. She gave a warm greeting to the Eza and expressed her gratitude at meeting everyone at Three Wheels. Visitors to Vancouver are very welcome to contact Lori who will be very happy to show them their temple and to help them



Miss Keiko Toro from Japan

make contacts in other parts of Canada.

We also welcomed Prof. Keiko Torii from Japan who teaches Jodo Shinshu to university students in Japan, and is currently enjoying a sabbatical to meet Jodo Shinshu practitioners around the world.

Mrs Kaori Punwani gave an update on the recent Garden Open Days which have again provided a wonderful opportunity to meet hundreds of visitors, to share the beautiful garden and to work together as a Sangha for the benefit of ourselves and others.

After closing the formal part of the meeting, guests enjoyed a shared meal and conversation. Many thanks to everyone who made the day possible, whether in preparing food or other practical arrangements and in attending and supporting the event. Thanks also to Japanese Dharma friends at Shogyoji - through their tireless support we continue to have the opportunity to hear the Dharma here in the UK!

Namu Amida Butsu!

Matthew Albiges

Editor's Note: This is an extract from the talk given by Prof. John White at the 127th London Eza entitled 'On Illusion'.

In speaking of illusion, my starting point is Shakyamuni Buddha's repeated statement, as recorded in the Diamond Cutter Sutra, that the treatise of the Law, or ultimate reality, "is incomprehensible and inexpressible" and its nature "cannot be understood, nor can it be made to be understood."

These statements, repeated or paraphrased in many other Sutras, are not only things for philosophers to deal with, but are, if anything, still more important in terms of science. For all our efforts, we can never escape our fundamental subjectivity, can never get truly outside of ourselves.

Since we, who are made up of atoms, can only use atoms themselves to probe their own products and the constituent parts which also appear to make up the structure of the universe at large, any search for an 'ultimate reality' is doomed, in the end, to fail.

Whatever the form of logic that is used, it is, by definition, a human or, to see it in its proper context, an animal construct, with all the limitations which that implies.

Sooner or later, for all the seeming miracles of creativity and understanding which pour forth with exponentially increasing range and precision with every passing day, science will, by its very nature, eventually hit a brick wall.

Beyond it lies an endless multiplicity of theories or mental constructs which can neither be proved nor disproved, and are consequently, whether in terms of language or of mathematics, the realm of the purest forms of illusion and paradox.



Prof. John White

A linguistic example is the simple-seeming assertion that "this statement is false" which, if it is true, is false, and if it is false, true, and there are other, similar paradoxes in pure mathematics.

Already in 1931 and the immediately following years, Kurt Gödel showed, together with others, that no set of fundamental mathematical axioms can ever be used to prove itself to be true.

Furthermore, no scientist and no philosopher can by the use of logic, mathematical or otherwise, or by the creation of models or the use of ever more complex equations, tell

us why the universe or the matter out of which it evolved came into being in the first place. In this the ancient Buddhists and modern scientists are at one.

Stupa Restoration Work



The new Stupa

Early July, the Stupa of Namu-Amida-Butsu at Brookwood Cemetery was refurbished with a new more durable design for its mound. In order to undertake this vital restoration work, Rev. Zensho Yoshihara, a senior priest of Shogyoji temple and Mr Masayuki Ogawa, Kyoto's top garden designer, came to London to supervise the project and work together with Dharma-friends from Three Wheels.

The grass mound of the Stupa, which had severely deteriorated due to the elements and the ravages of local wildlife, has now been replaced by a concrete dome inset with beautiful pebbles of various different colours and



The Restoration Team

hues. It was a great experience and privilege to work with Rev. Yoshihara and Mr Ogawa and to spend time with them at Three Wheels. We all shared a wonderful spiritual encounter together and the Stupa has now been endowed with a fresh new life through everyone's combined efforts

. If you would like to learn more about the history and significance of the Stupa of Namu-Amida-Butsu please visit its dedicated page on the Three Wheels Website.

Andrew Webb

National Garden Scheme (NGS) Garden Open Days 2016

On this, our 10th Anniversary year of holding Garden Open Days for the Three Wheels Zen Garden, we were delighted to welcome 192 visitors over 4 afternoons in June. As a result we have managed to raise £588.50 for the NGS. Currently NGS gives £2.5 million to their supported charities every year, such as Macmillan Cancer Support. We would like to thank everyone who has helped make this event a success.

Notably this year we gave the visitors the chance to sit quietly and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of the garden in between the talks given by the garden designer Prof. John White.

This year's event was also featured by the Evening Stan-

dard online (weekend gallery), and also Time Out London (things to do). All the income generated from our volunteers selling tickets for the tea ceremony, books, postcards and various other items for sale was donated to Three Wheels. We hope that you will continue with your support and join the Garden Open Days again next year. Please spread the word to your friends and family.

Dates of Garden Open Days 2017:

**3rd - 4th and 17th - 18th of June,
2 ~ 5 pm.**

Kaori Punwani



Visitors listening to Prof. John White's talk



"10th Anniversary Certificate presented by the NGS"

Activities for the Young

Our Trip to Cumbria - The Students' Meeting

For the first time, members of Students' meeting participated in a residential trip to Cumbria, the place where many of our rocks in the Zen garden at Three Wheels originated from. The annual Spring School event, a 10 day trip to the UK for Japanese teenagers was cancelled this year which was a disappointment for the members of our students' meeting in the UK. However, they were given this special opportunity to visit Cumbria during their school holiday together with Rev. and Mrs Ishii.

Without having to say too much, we can imagine how greatly the students enjoyed the self-catering experience away from home, the beautiful countryside and the fun games and activities. The students were also given the opportunity to read the Sutra entitled "The Great Importance of What Has Been Done for Us by Our Parents" in the morning meetings and have a deep dialogue with their friends and teachers. These morning meetings gave the students an opportunity to think outside the box



The students in Cumbria

and become more aware of what has been done for them throughout their lives.

Celebrating The Buddha's Birthday – A Children's Meeting

On the 9th of April, members of the Children's Meeting joined the Flower Festival at Three Wheels to celebrate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. This event was an opportunity for the children to perform the production that they

spent several months preparing called "Prince Siddhartha". Through working on this production, the children were able to learn about the early life story of Shakyamuni Buddha who was also known as 'Prince Siddhartha' at the time of his birth and growing up. The story showed how the prince, who had such a fulfilled royal life, spent his time contemplating why people age, become ill and die. Due to his deep encounter with monks, he made a decision to become a monk himself.

The members of Children's Meeting made the production from scratch by creating a script, props, costume and set. All the hard work and good performance left everyone very proud of their achievements.

A month after the Flower Festival the members of the Children's Meeting went on a trip to a city farm. The big space and fresh air without doubt filled the children with joy.



The children's meeting

Kaori Punwani

The Infants' Meeting at Three Wheels

It is almost a year now since we began our monthly Infants' Meeting for pre-school children and it has been a delight to welcome so many parents and young children to Three Wheels.

For many these meetings have been their first time to visit Three Wheels. Each meeting begins with time for the children to play and get to know each other. Then we have time for a special activity. At the last meeting the children learnt how to bow before the Buddha-shrine. It was very impressive to see them learn this. The meeting ends with a short service in the Buddha-room. It is wonderful to see the children becoming familiar with the temple and learning to harmonise with one another. For us mothers we also have time to chat together and discuss our experiences bringing up small children.

For Japanese mothers raising young children in the U.K., and English not being our first language, it is difficult to discuss our problems frankly with others and we can often feel very isolated. We are very happy to have this time at Three Wheels to meet one another and exchange experiences. It is our hope that each child can get to



The Infants' meeting at Three Wheels

know Three Wheels well and as they grow older join the Children's Meeting and Students' Meeting. If you would like to bring your child to the Infants' Meeting please check the Three Wheels website for the dates of the meetings.

Mako Webb

A Poem by John White

Do not ever
cling;

not to past
nor to present,

but always
move on.

To cling
is to trap oneself,

to die
before one is dead.

*Samyutta Nikaya
Waka*

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.

All donations are welcome

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