



# THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

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Newsletter

October 1973

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Throssel Hole Priory is a Zen Buddhist training monastery following the Soto tradition located at Carr Shield, Nr. Hexham, Northumberland, England.

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## EDITORIAL

Rev. Jiyu Kennett Roshi has returned for the moment to California and the Priory is now being run by Rev. Daiji Strathern. Before Roshi left for America, we had a meeting of all here to decide the future of the Priory. It was decided that if sufficient funds were available, we would move the Priory to a larger establishment, somewhat closer to the major centres of population in England. And if such funds were not available, we would stay here at Carrshield and renovate the present Meditation Hall and dining room and generally bring the present facilities up to a reasonable standard and at a later date enlarge them. Since that decision was made we have sent out an appeal for funds and it has become obvious that sufficient funds would not be available to move. We, therefore, have set about planning the renovation of the present buildings. To this end we called in an architect for his advise and for drawings etc. to convert the building presently housing the Meditation Hall and Dining room. The architect told us (and we have since confirmed this independantly), that the building is structually unsound and that therefore, to try to do anything with it would be a waste of money. We have therefore instructed him to draw up plans for a building slightly larger than the present one including the following facilities: a new Meditation Hall about the same size as the present one, a dining room a little smaller than the present one, lavatories and showers for both men and women, and a new and larger kitchen. This building will be built once planning permission has been obtained on the site of the present car park. The achitect has informed us that including things like heating and decorating the building, it will cost about £5,000.00, if we do the construction work ourselves. We have managed to raise £2,500.00 of this, and so if the Priory is to continue we must find a further £2,500.00. Anyone who would be prepared to donate or lend (preferably interest-free), part or all of this amount would they please contact the Priory.

Construction work should start shortly after Christmas and we hope that the building will be completed sometime between April and June depending on the weather, the availability of materials and financing.

We have also, as those who have visited us know, been plagued by a shortage of water, the little we did have being of dubious quality. You will therefore be glad to hear that we have found a sufficient supply of water from an underground spring high up on the property, and are at present in the process of exploiting it.

Editor

## MOMENT TO MOMENT AWARENESS

We asked you in the first newsletter to let us know if you had any problems and we said we would try to answer. Well here is a quote from a letter we recieved:

"...I would be grateful for any help on how to attain a state of awareness from moment to moment during the day-- I realize that this must be something that one works at the whole of one's life and never fully attains, but nevertheless there must be ways and ways of going about it?"

This is one of the most fundamental problems in the whole of Buddhism, but it is also one that can be taken onesidedly. So a word firstly about types of awareness:

In the Abhidharma there is an analysis of an enormous variety of states of awareness, but these tend to fall into two main groupings: Positive awareness and Negative awareness. Negative awareness is closed and though it may not seem so at the time, leads inevitably to a diminishing of the awareness itself; also, and more importantly, it always diminishes one's awareness of the rest of the world and of oneself. As examples of this is the awareness of the thief as he steals, an awareness based on fear and greed and again the awareness that the hypochondriac has of his own body: a morbid awareness based on fear, and also on selfishness. Both of these are cold and self-centred and closed, and can be contrasted with the awareness that a mother has towards her newborn child, which is both warm and outgoing, making her more aware of her surroundings and those around her, and frequently also more aware of herself; Again take the awareness of a good business man who is concerned not only with making a profit but, and in long run more importantly, is aware of his responsibilities to those who work for him and to those to whom he sells. Here too is an outgoing positive awareness that will often show to the person concerned some of his shortcomings and inadequacies so that if he is open and responsive he may deal with them in his training.

From these examples we can see that awareness itself is quite a neutral thing but that we change it into something that can help us train in a positive direction of more awareness and greater warmth and openness or in a negative direction away from this. Please, therefore, keep this in mind during the following discussion of the practical side. It is very important not to let your awareness slowly drift off into negativity by becoming less open and warm, and slowly more and more mechanical.

Awareness in daily life is one of the most difficult things to achieve, and is only aquired through single-minded perseverance, which in turn takes a great effort of will and determination. In your daily routine whether it is here at the Priory, in an office, on a building site or doing housework, the key to awareness is to get on with what you are doing but not to be caught up and involved to the extent that you get completely swept away by it.

What do I mean when I say that the key to awareness is to get on with what you are doing? Simply this: when you are doing one thing just do that, and do it to the utmost of your ability. Do not indulge in day dreams of something else: whether it be of what you will do when you have finished or more insidiously, about the job itself: how it could be done better, what effect it will have, etc. The only important thing is to actually get on with it with as much energy as possible and every time that you find that your mind has wandered to bring it back to the work in hand and go on energetically. On the other hand, it is no good just throwing yourself into your work so that you get completely carried away by it, in effect, then the work does you and not you the work. When this happens your mind has wandered, but not to some completely different subject. If you stop and look you will find that your mind is racing frenetically about the job in hand, and that your energy is not going into the job in hand so much as into the job in mind. You have taken one step back from the work, whilst seeming to lose yourself in it. You have, of course, not lost yourself in the job but in your mind. The answer to both these problems is to stop as soon as you notice what is happening, calmly recollect yourself and what you are doing and start afresh. If you have some difficulty at catching notice of what is happening then make it a habit to stop once an hour, for a minute, just to get things back into perspective: or at least do so every coffee or tea break or at lunch.

If you follow this advice sincerely, and the emphasis must always be on the sincerity with which you train, then soon your awareness will deepen. But there is one pitfall that nearly all trainees fall into at some time or other. It is simply this: the subject of your awareness should be what you are doing right at this moment. Now at some time or other a trainee will think he knows what he is doing and try and be aware of this only leads him into confusion. He knows that he is doing something wrong because he can feel it in the confusion, but he thinks that he is doing the right thing. This comes from a basic fallacy that he can already be aware of what it is that he is trying to become aware of! Obviously this cannot be so, but it is a deceptively easy trap to fall into. When you are trying to be aware you should try to be aware of what you are doing, without preconditioning this or trying to be aware of any specific thing for if you knew what you need to be aware of you would already be aware of it. It is because you do not know what you need to become more aware of until you are totally aware at all times. It is only when you can admit to yourself that you do not know, that you can then stop and take a clear unpreconditioned look at yourself and what you are doing. And this is the true beginning of awareness.

DAIJI STRATHERN

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Originally we had planned the first issue for July, but unfortunately other commitments did not allow us to meet this date and whilst the actual date of issue was August we forgot to change the month. So when you receive this copy please do not think that we have missed sending you one between this and the first issue.

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## PRIORY NEWS AND EVENTS

### DEPARTURE

Roshi, together with Rev. Florence, Rev. Baran and Rev. Little left England for America on the 22nd. of September.

### ORDINATIONS

During the August retreat Catherine Pollak was ordained as Rev. Houn Rikuko and in the September retreat Stan Kubliki was also ordained as a Preist-Trainee as Rev. Houn Gikko. During these retreats 13 people became Lay Buddhists being given the Precepts.

### SHIN ZAN

The summer training period ended on the last day of the September Sesshin with Rev. Daiji Strathern being installed as Prior, and Rev. Hofuku Hughes installed as Chief Junior.

### TYNE TEES T.V.

Rev. Daiji Strathern recorded a programme on the 9th of October for Tyne Tees T.V. to be shown at a later date for a school programme in the afternoon. The programme was basically an introduction to Buddhism being part of a series of programmes on world religions.

### NEW TERM

The Autumn training period is now underway having started on the 26th of September. A weekend retreat was held on the 6th and 7th of October.

### RETREATS

Retreats during the Autumn training period will be held on:  
November 3rd and 4th.  
December 1st and 2nd.  
December 15th to 23rd. (week long)

Retreats during the Winter training period will be held on:  
January 7th and 8th.  
February 11th and 12th.  
March 4th and 5th.  
March 23rd to 31st. (week long)

For more information on these Retreats or anything else please write to the Priory. Anyone can visit the Priory at any time so long as they have written arranging that they may come first.

### COMMUNITY

Rev. Daiji Strathern- Prior  
Rev. Dogo Klein, Rev. Kembo Wyatt, Rev. Hofuku Hughes, Rev. Kyosei Hughes, Rev. Suigan Liddie, Rev. Rikuko Pollak, Rev. Giko Kubliki.