

## Postcards from Tibet - May

Peter Jost



Ganzi just coming out of winter. Snow on the hills. Getting warmer each day



Beautiful kora around Ganzi Gumpa; within it many small circuits of sacred object and chortans



Believe it or not, they still mend pots and pans in this day and age! This is a kettle getting a new bottom.



May is caterpillar fungus digging season in Ganzi. People can earn 90% of their year's income in one month

Ganzi is thriving, if appearances can be believed. It now has several sets of traffic lights! The road from Chengdu is much improved - 16 tunnels from Chengdu to Kangding instead of one, just 2 years ago. One tunnel is about 10km long. Perfect tarmac now links Kangding and Ganzi.

Many young people are out in the hills digging caterpillar fungus for the month. Many people from out of town in Ganzi are in full traditional dress, staring at the strange foreigners. Tibetan culture seems very much in evidence, stronger than ever. American culture cannot be seen at all thankfully. Everything just slightly cleaner, 'better' and more developed than previously.

Geshe Sonam has mentioned previously that education is a popular subject of conversation on the street here. Ganzi Gumpa is developing a hospital for local people. We met the head and he showed us many medicines and supplies. They will build a new building for it.

### SPONSORSHIP DATA - JUNE 2015

	Sponsored	Seeking Sponsor	Total
Students	364	128	492
Nuns	146	42	188
Monks	176	154	330
University	102		

## One Sponsor's Story

Helen McKenzie

In 2002, I was managing the Sacred Footsteps Mandala Tour for the first time - setting up the itinerary, driving the bus, event managing and looking after the monks. We brought out six monks that first year and it was quite a task finding accommodation and looking after them all. One of the monks was Sonam Tashi - tall dark and handsome with beautiful manners. I decided to sponsor him, and have done ever since.

In 2004 I travelled to Sera Monastery in South India and was given the royal treatment as honoured guest by Sonam Tashi and the other monks. I saw where and how he lives. In 2010 I travelled to Tibet and met his parents and his sister. I saw the area he came from and learned a lot about the life he would have lived in Tibet.

Sonam Tashi writes a thank you letter to me after each payment period in January and July, and I write back to him with news and the occasional photo. I have enjoyed the regular updates on his studies and life in the monastery. Especially satisfying was the news that he had completed his studies and passed the Geshe exam. In December 2014, Sonam Tashi sent me photos of his installation as a Geshe at Sera Jey Monastery and amazingly I felt an almost parental pride in his achievement.



In 2010 I decided to sponsor a child in Ganzi. I chose a young boy Tashi Dorje aged 14 at the time from a photo. I wrote some letters and sent some parcels across to him, but had no reply to any of my requests for contact and information. Early this year, I sent a letter and gift for him with two people who were going to Ganzi and was delighted to receive a reply and some information at last.



He is now a very healthy looking 19 year old who is in his first year at university studying to be a teacher. As I was a teacher for forty years, I feel as though we have something in common. Even without the regular communication that I enjoy with my (now) Geshe Sonam Tashi, I still feel that my contribution is producing good results for Tashi Dorje and ultimately for his community.

I guess my message to other sponsors is try to make contact with the person you are sponsoring even if you have to persevere. It really helps you understand exactly how much your contribution benefits those receiving it.

# Sacred Footsteps Mandala Tour



2015 Tour Monks from left:  
Chemi Tsering, Gelek Tenpa and Yama Gyatso

Hard to believe that the Mandala Tour is now in its third month. The group is now in New South Wales hopefully enjoying some warm weather. They are certainly enjoying some very warm hospitality as Australian families and organisations welcome them into their communities.

This lovely photo was taken by Kelly Laird at Horsham Plaza Shopping Centre in April. Thanks to the Horsham Weekly Advertiser for permission to use the photo in our reporting on the tour.

## Mandala Tour News

*Shortly after the above photo was taken, Gelek Tenpa found out that an injury to his foot at Drol Kar Centre before leaving on the tour, was in fact a fracture to his leg. This meant 6 weeks in plaster.*



*This week in Gosford, the plaster has been replaced by a supportive boot for a further 2 weeks.*



### Tour Itinerary NSW

#### JUNE

GOSFORD - Tues 16 – Sun 21 June  
Erina Fair Shopping Centre

BELROSE SYDNEY Tues 23 – Sun 28 June  
Imperial Gardens/Hidden Orient

#### JULY

AVALON - Tues 30 June – Sun 5 July  
Avalon Recreation Centre

MAITLAND - Tues 7 – Sun 12 July  
Maitland Regional Art Gallery

NEWCASTLE - Tues 14 – Sun 19 July  
Charlestown Square Shopping Centre

DUBBO - Wed 22 – Sat 25 July  
Western Plains Cultural Centre

WELLINGTON - Sun 26 – Mon 27 July  
Tharpa Choeling Buddhist Centre

COWRA - Wed 29 July – Sun 2 Aug  
Cowra Regional Gallery,

#### AUGUST

ULLADULLA – Thurs 6 – Sun 9 Aug  
Ulladulla Community Centre,

Manjushri Mandala - May 31  
Quang Minh Temple Braybrook

## Final Day at Quang Minh Temple in Braybrook May 31 2015

Hundreds of visitors flowed through the old gompa at Quang Minh Temple on the final day to see the beautiful Manjushri mandala that adorned the room. Geshe Sonam gave a talk to the largely Vietnamese crowd – translated enthusiastically into Vietnamese by a member of the QMT community.

The maroon and gold of the Tibetan Sangha was matched in colour by the vivid yellows of the Vietnamese Sangha present for the dissolution of the mandala.

The visit featured the rare event of a fire puja, which was conducted in the forecourt near the main temple. The night was cold and dark but many braved the elements to experience the exhilaration of the fire mingled with the monks chanting.

Seventeen new sponsorships for monks and students were taken up by the community at the Vietnamese temple event, including the sponsoring of our three tour monks. And a lot of sand was distributed after the dissolution.

Sincere thanks to the Sangha and community at Quang Minh for their hospitality and graciousness in providing not only a space for the mandala and the Tibetan handcrafts stall, but also for accommodating and providing beautiful meals for the group during the whole week.

Special thanks to our great spiritual friend, the abbot of Chua Quang Minh, Venerable Phuoc Tan.

