The Longère: a top retreat place to become. Update on renovation

written by Shenten

The Longère is a long building adjacent to the Château of Shenten Dargye Ling. As you may know, it has been undergoing a profound transformation since the autumn of 2021. Once a woodcrafter atelier, built in the 17th century, Longère is currently being transformed into an attractive retreat place which would serve the community of practitioners connected to ShentenDargye Ling. Demanding and challenging work has already been completed on the building, but plenty of other things are still needed to be done.

To begin with…

The initial condition of the building was characterized by cracked walls with unsuitable interior coating, severely damaged exterior stones, an inappropriate and archaic drainage system which exposed the building and its chalk stone base to constant humidity and lastly a courtyard of soil interwoven with invasive liana roots. Much work, especially in the interior, has already been accomplished, thanks to many volunteers whereas most parts of the exterior repairs we needed to hire professionals.

Gutters from the scratch

Replacing the existing drainage system was a complex process. It started with a several-day strenuous removal of the liana roots to enable the drainage pipelines to be installed underground. Complete gutter replacement followed. Old zinc pipes around the roof were changed respecting the original material; rain gutters and pipelines were extended underground and proper water reservoirs built. New pipeline system channeling the rainwater runoff to the nearby lake was installed underground. A half meter thick layer of gravel bed was installed around the exterior base

of the building to stop excess moisture. Damaged eaves were repaired and heavily damaged cornerstones replaced.

As the cherry on the top, Khenpo Gelek reshaped the outside area and created a base for a future garden and terrace. All was done in three days.

Even though we are still far from the final accomplishment, the retreat room in the Longère already has had many interested prospective occupants. Drubdra Khenpo Tenzin Tsultrim being among them. Named by Yongdzin Rinpoche as the Treasure of the Instruction, this new retreat room, without a doubt, will be an excellent place for practice.

Inside out, upside down: Transformation of the interior

While many of the exterior reparations are mostly hidden from view, changes in the interior structure are striking at first glance. Some walls were removed and some new were built. There are now two separate rooms, each with separate entrances along with a shared kitchen, bathroom and toilet. Old cement isolation of the walls was removed. New natural hemp lime isolation, allowing the walls to properly breathe, will be installed by professionals this summer.

Electricity and water systems will be installed and the ceilings lowered to create needed space. Measurements for new windows and doors have been taken and we are awaiting the price estimates.

One big project on its own is the extension of the window door leading to the lakeside. The height of the door will be increased and the top frame ornamented by stones crafted and engraved with the Five Warrior syllables mantra – the beautiful artwork is done as an offering by Les Compagnons.

“If everything goes smoothly, as we hope, all work should be completed during this year. Please keep your fingers crossed!” says Shenten team led by Khenpo Gelek.

And to contribute towards the Longère project, please visit this link.

pictures and text: Yana Karamari