

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP

Retreat Programme and Newsletter 13

For flexibility, we are combining the Retreat Programme and Newsletter into this single publication. So please look inside whether you are interested in local meditation groups' events, news, our residential retreat programme, or any other WCF matters.

New Group in Totnes

There is a new Meditation Group meeting in Totnes on Monday evenings. The contact is Pete Lowry, whom many of you will know from his cooking at Maenllwyd. Contact Pete at petelowry@yahoo.co.uk, Tel 01803 868379.

Sponsor a Monk

During his recent trip to Mustang John Crook and others visited a monastery in Lo-Monthang and were very impressed by the school and the training for lamas. The monastery runs a scheme for sponsoring a monk during their studies (8 years) at the rate of \$420 per year. Following discussion and agreement with the Western Chan Fellowship, the Bristol Chan Group and WCF are jointly funding sponsorship of 9 year old Sherab Tenzin from the nearby village of Tsosher.

Local Group Websites

It is now possible for local groups to have their own websites linked to the WCF website. The Glastonbury group site can be seen at <http://glastonbury.westernchanfellowship.org>, and Manchester at <http://manchester.westernchanfellowship.org>. If any other groups want to do likewise please contact secretary@westernchanfellowship.org.

Improved Search Facility on WCF Website

The website search facility has been upgraded. Now, when you enter your search terms, they are checked not only against the text documents on the WCF site, but also against other documents on the website such as pdf files (e.g. recent issues of New Chan Forum), and furthermore also against the New York Chan Center website. Thus in one search you may locate terms of interest not only in New Chan Forum, but also in past issues of the Chan Magazine and Chan Newsletter from New York, and also the rest of the WCF and Chan Center websites. Try it out!

Notes from the NBO:

Funerals The recent meeting in Bristol was devoted to examining material which is suitable for funerals. Particular problems may arise when the person who has died was Buddhist but the family and other mourners may be of other faiths. We examined various aspects of this issue and have decided on two lines of development. A group will get together to devise suitable training for lay people, enabling them to conduct funerals within the Buddhist community. In addition, we hope to assemble material for a publication, of value to Funeral Directors and to families who may be planning their own funeral arrangements.

Arts Festival 2005 We are planning to hold an Arts Festival at the end of June 2005. As the NBO cannot undertake to organise a series of large events itself, we hope to be the coordinator for a variety of events, large and small, scattered around the country, in much the same way as a balloon seller holds the strings of many balloons. If you have ideas, expertise or enthusiasm and would be willing to help, please get in touch on 0845 345-8978 or e-mail Sally Mashedder at secretary@nbo.org.uk

Western Chan Fellowship Retreats

The Western Chan Fellowship offers retreats providing training in Zen insight and fresh ways of being. The Maenllwyd retreat centre has been providing disciplined Zen, Tibetan and Chan (Chinese Zen) retreats for over 25 years. Participants need not be Buddhist, and indeed, probably the majority are not.



The programme of retreats with the Western Chan Fellowship provides a progressive series of events designed to deepen self-understanding and insight into the Buddhist path. Serious practitioners, and this includes beginners, are invited to take advantage of these rare opportunities for practice and self-discovery in an atmosphere of warmth and the cultivation of kindness.

Western Zen Retreats and Shorter Chan Retreats are open to beginners and adepts alike. Mahamudra and full Chan retreats are open to those who have already attended a Western Zen Retreat or an equivalent retreat. Details required on application.

These retreats are serious and quite demanding. Participants gain important insights into their lives and into the Buddhist path and many return for further retreats. Some indeed make these retreats their main practice. The atmosphere is caring and supportive and interviews (opportunities to speak to the teacher) are always available. You are welcome to enquire further when considering whether a retreat is right for you.

Retreats may be led by John Crook, PhD. DSc *Chuan-deng Jing-di*, Simon Child *Chuan-fa Jing-hong*, Hilary Richards, or Ken Jones. Both John Crook and Simon Child are Dharma heirs of Chan Master Shengyen of the Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture, Taipei and New York, and are fully authorised teachers in the lineages of Linji and Caodong Chan. Hilary Richards is a long-term practitioner with Dr John Crook and Master Shengyen, is the Chair of the Western Chan Fellowship, and leads retreats at Maenllwyd and at Gaia House. Ken Jones has been for many years a prime mover in "engaged Buddhism" on which he has written three influential books. He is also a leader of intensive workshops and retreats. His prize-winning poems (Haibun) often appear in NCF.

Please Book Early

- Sometimes retreats fill up quickly and we have to turn people away.
- Sometimes retreats book up slowly and at the time that we send out booking confirmation letters (about a month beforehand) we have to decide whether to cancel an under-booked retreat.

Please try to book retreat places well in advance, so as to secure a place for yourself and to help us with the planning and organisation.

Retreat Descriptions

SILENT ILLUMINATION CHAN RETREAT This traditional week long retreat (Saturday to Saturday) will allow the time and space for serious practitioners to learn, practice and cultivate the method of Silent Illumination. Simple yet difficult, within this space you may encounter an opening that allows you to come to rest and find freedom, peace and lucidity. This is not a place to opt out but enables effective engagement with daily life. Facilitated in a kindly and supportive manner we will present the teaching and methods of Master Shengyen, through practice, talks and individual interviews. The format will be that of a full Chan retreat, rising early, a rigorous schedule of meditation and exercise, with work periods for food preparation and keeping the Maenllwyd (Grey Mountain) log fires glowing. In the still heart of Wales, join us for this intensive Seven Day Chan Retreat. *Leader: John Crook.*

KOAN RETREAT This retreat focuses on traditional koans as a means of training. This retreat is designed for Westerners based in the writings of Linji, Hsu-yun, Hakuin, and Dogen, and incorporates both Chinese and Japanese approaches in a fresh format. Previous experience of either a Western Zen Retreat or Chan retreat is required. *Leader: John Crook.*

LEADERS TRAINING RETREAT A retreat for group leaders in the WCF providing instruction through practice and discussion on how to teach meditation and run small Dharma groups. The WCF AGM will follow on at the end of this event. *By invitation only.*

WESTERN ZEN RETREAT A simple monastic regime enables the mind to face the major paradox - Who am I? - in creative mutual questioning. People work in pairs in exploring this fundamental Koan. The intensive focus drives each into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. The outcome may be a profound sense of the unity of self and possibly a direct insight into the 'ground of being', in traditional Zen considered to be a glimpse of Enlightenment. Whether or not such an insight happens, participants share a rich experience in new self-knowledge and understanding others. Open equally to beginners and established trainees. *Leader: Simon Child.*

DOGEN ZEN - TAKING THE BACKWARD STEP This retreat will focus on Dogen Zen, with a koan orientation. It will incorporate compassion and mindfulness practices. It is suitable only for people well experienced in meditation retreats. *Leader: Ken Jones*

INTRODUCTORY CHAN RETREAT (*To be confirmed*) Alone with others, just sitting, this weekend will be about the practice of meditation. We will provide a space for anyone to experience silence for four days within the structure of a Chan Retreat. The format will be as in a full Chan retreat, rising early with meditation and exercise periods throughout the day. The schedule is rigorous requiring both gentle persistence and great determination. We will offer basic meditation instruction and guidance throughout, supporting each person through short talks and individual discussion in interviews. The retreat is suitable for both beginners and more experienced practitioners but will not necessarily be an easy or comfortable option. *To be confirmed.*

MAHAMUDRA ON THE TANTRIC PATH An opportunity for practitioners to deepen their insight through an introduction to a profound Tibetan meditation system that originated in India during the richest period of Mahayana evolution. Preliminary exercises create the motivation for receiving an empowerment to practice methods evoking compassion and wisdom with humility and self-understanding. The retreat provides the first steps in "becoming a Buddha in one lifetime" through the mental yogas of the Mahamudra meditation system. *Leader: John Crook.*

RETREATS

The following events are scheduled at the Maenllwyd during 2004

March 12 th – 18 th	* Koan Retreat *	John Crook	FULL
March 18 th – 21 st	Leaders Retreat and WCF AGM		FULL
May 15 th – 22 nd	* Shining Silence: Silent Illumination *	John Crook	£240
June 3 rd - 8 th	* Dogen Zen *	Ken Jones	£180
June 10 th – 15 th	Western Zen Retreat	Simon Child	£180
Aug 26 th – Sept 2 nd	Introduction to Meditation	To be advised	£185
<i>Provisional scheduling (Check the website for confirmation)</i>			
October 14 th – 19 th	Western Zen Retreat	Simon Child	£185
November 11 th – 16 th	* Mahamudra *	John Crook	£185

** indicates not suitable for beginners **

- This programme is subject to changes, cancellations, and additions. Updates will be posted on our website at www.WesternChanFellowship.org
- Retreats usually start about 7pm on the first evening. Full Chan retreats finish after breakfast, shorter retreats either mid-morning or after lunch.
- Full details and directions are sent on booking.
- Note that there are further retreats at other centres listed on the lower half of page 6

Bursaries (Concessions) For Low or No-Waged Applicants

The Western Chan Fellowship (WCF) is registered as a charity and has received donations to provide a bursary fund to help people with low or no-waged income to attend the WCF retreats. There will be a limited number of bursary places per retreat and financial support will vary according to the applicant's needs, typically a discount of 50% of the retreat fee. Please write giving details of your requirements, if you would like to apply for bursary-funded support to attend a WCF retreat.

Bursaries must be applied for in writing in advance of the retreat, either prior to or at the time of booking.

Please contact the treasurer if you would like to make a donation to the bursary fund or to other WCF projects.

How To Book A Place On A Retreat

Use the **application form** which is printed on the back page of this brochure, and is also available from the retreats page of the website westernchanfellowship.org/retreats

General Enquiries: Bookings@WesternChanFellowship.org, Tel 01793 740659.

To discuss a retreat with John Crook email Teacher@WesternChanFellowship.org or phone/fax 01934 842231, evenings when available.

Maenllwyd Retreat Centre

Maenllwyd is an old farm-building, several hundred years old in parts, in a remote valley in mid-Wales. Modernisation extends to mains water only. There is no electricity, and no telephone, and no reception for mobile phones. Heat and light come from candles, lamps, fires, and gas or paraffin stoves. No one passes by except occasional local sheep-farmers with their flocks. It provides an ideal environment for intensive meditation practice, which is the main emphasis of our retreats. The centre is not open to casual visitors, only for pre-booked residential retreats.

The meditation hall (Chan hall) is kept clean and dry and warm. It is a converted barn which enjoys the benefit of a modern wood-burning stove that both keeps the hall warm and fuels the hot showers. It also boasts modern, eco-friendly, composting toilets.

Sleeping accommodation is best described as basic. The nearest equivalent is a sleeping barn as used by the YHA. Think, "tent with stone walls" and you will have the idea. Several people of the same sex sleep in close proximity, each with their own futon. Typically this will be in the eaves of one of the main buildings with the roof beams visible above. Such areas are naturally draughty and dusty and may have been visited by local wildlife such as field mice. Heating in these areas is minimal and this requires you to have adequate warm sleeping-bags and blankets along with warm night-clothing. Autumn, winter and spring can be surprisingly cold in these Welsh hills.

The yard is a traditional farmyard, complete with a spring that turns the yard to mud in wet weather. Wellingtons or boots are advised for this area and for walks on the hillside.

Vegetarian food is cooked for us by an imaginative Zen cook, using fresh and largely organic supplies, and bread and cakes are made on the premises. Special diets can be catered for if the cook is advised in advance.

Further Reading

On Maenllwyd Retreat Centre See: www.westernchanfellowship.org/maenllwyd

On Western Zen Retreats See: Chapters 8 and 13 in *Space in Mind: East-West Psychology and Contemporary Buddhism*. (eds John Crook and David Fontana) Element Press 1991.

On Chan See: Any of the works by Master Sheng Yen. Dharma Drum Press. With particular reference to Maenllwyd see: *Illuminating Silence*, Master Sheng Yen, with introductions and commentaries by Dr John Crook, Watkins 2002.

On Mahamudra. See: Crook J. and J. Low 1997. *The Yogins of Ladakh*. Motilal Banarsidass. Delhi. Available from John Crook, Winterhead Hill Farm, Winscombe, N. Somerset, BS25 1RS £17 plus p&p.

Retreat Reports by Past Participants may be read on the website at westernchanfellowship.org, and in our journal *New Chan Forum* (Send £10.50 to Peter Howard for a subscription for three issues).

Other Events

Talks by John Crook in Bristol

This winter John is giving a series of three talks on **The Sutras Of Chinese Zen** at the Bristol Chan Group Wednesday evening meetings at 7.30pm at the Coach House, 40a Eastfield, Westbury-on-Trym. BS9 4BE. Details of the final two talks are as follows:

Wednesday 4th Feb 2004: **The Lankavatara Sutra and the “Awakening of Faith”**. These Sutras provide a psychological interpretation of meditation.

Wednesday 3rd Mar 2004: **The Avatamsaka Sutra** which became the basis for the Huayen philosophy important in late Chan understanding and which shows fascinating parallels with modern systems theory. Huayen may be seen as the last great philosophical interpretation of the Mahayana before Buddhism became known in the West.

Bristol Weekend Retreats

‘Through Self, Towards No-Self’

In Chan we talk of no-self, but we do not mean to deny or disparage the self. In this weekend retreat, through meditation and teachings, we explore the relationship between self and no-self.

Saturday and Sunday, 21st / 22nd February 2004, at the Unitarian Meeting House, Brunswick Square, Bristol, led by Simon Child, *Chuan-fa Jing-hong*.

Cost £35. (A limited number of bursaries are available) Please bring lunch to share, a cushion, mat and blanket. To reserve a place, please contact: John Chettoe 01749 676248, email bookings@bristol-chan.co.uk or write to Bristol Chan Group, 1 Drake Road, Wells Somerset, BA5 3JX. Other enquiries to 0117 924 8819 or enquiries@bristol-chan.co.uk

Advance notice: 1st May, Tonen O’Connor will lead a one-day retreat in Bristol.

Manchester Group Day Retreats

The Manchester group continues to hold regular day retreats – details are posted on the website <http://manchester.westernchanfellowship.org>

More Retreats Elsewhere

Gaia House Weekend Retreat January 30th - February 1st led by Simon Child and Hilary Richards. Apply to Gaia House Tel 01626 333613 www.gaiahouse.co.uk

New York, USA, Western Zen Retreat, April 16th –21st: John Crook, Simon Child, and Hilary Richards will lead a Western Zen Retreat in New York. Details www.chancenter.org.

Switzerland, Master Shengyen, May 2nd – 9th: Translation will be into English and the main method will be Silent Illumination. Contact: Meditationzentrum Beatenburg, 3802 Waldegg-Beatenburg, Switzerland, www.karuna.ch, info@karuna.ch, Tel ++41(0) 33 841 2131, Fax +44(0) 33 841 2132

Hamburg, Germany, Chan Retreat July 3rd - 10th: John Crook and Simon Child will lead a Silent Illumination Retreat at the Haus der Stille near Hamburg, Germany. For details and booking contact info@hausderstille.org www.hausderstille.org.

John Crook will also lead **retreats in Poland (June 15th – 20th), Norway (probably in October), and perhaps other countries.** Contact teacher@westernchanfellowship.org Phone/Fax +44 (0) 1934 842231 Evenings when available.

About The Western Chan Fellowship

The Western Chan Fellowship was formed in 1997 and registered as a charity in 1998. It was based on a network of local groups which formed following the first teaching visit to the UK in 1989 of the Venerable Chan Master Dr Shengyen. Master Shengyen is the Abbot of two monasteries in Taiwan and head of the Institutes of Chung Hwa Buddhist Culture in Taiwan and New York.

Master Shengyen has visited the UK four times and has passed on to us a view of the Dharma (teaching) based on his experience in both the main lineages of Chan - Linji (Rinzai) and Caodong (Soto). He is a second-generation teacher in the lineage of the Great Master Hsu Yun who did so much to restore Chan to China in the early years of the 20th century. Master Shengyen has also trained in Japan following the tradition of Harada Roshi, from whom several lineages of American Zen are currently descended. In Japan he also received a doctorate in Buddhist studies and is today a much-respected scholar. In attempting to transmit the wisdom of Master Shengyen, we have a tradition on which we can rely. John Crook received Dharma transmission from Master Shengyen in 1993, as did Simon Child in 2000, and thus both are fully authorised teachers in the same lineages.

We are a group of lay practitioners with properly authenticated teachers. The Western Chan Fellowship retreats are supported by a number of local groups which hold periodic meetings for meditation practice and are led by certificated meditation instructors. Our evening meetings are linked to both informal local day-retreats led by the local group meditation instructors, and to more disciplined and intensive residential retreats held at Maenllwyd. An introductory retreat – the Western Zen Retreat – is recommended before participation in a full Chan retreat.

Local Groups

Affiliated groups principally practice Chan and are closely associated with the WCF

Associated groups include friends and practitioners of the WCF, but may follow other traditions in addition to Chan:

Associated groups

Aberystwyth Ken Jones 01970 880603

Cardiff Eddy Street 029 2069 1146

Guildford Roger Taylor 01483 202422

Newbury Dave/Aurie McKay 01635 46139

Affiliated groups

Bristol Sally Masheder 0117 924 8819

Medway Towns Stuart McLeod 01634 571659

Glastonbury Ned Reiter 01458 833663

London Will Turner 020 8340 7278

Manchester Simon Child 0161 761 1945

Swindon Hughie Carroll 01793 343447

Totnes Pete Lowry 01803 868379

York James McCarthy 01904 330977

or Jannie Mead 01904 628536

Contacts for New Chan Forum and the Western Chan Fellowship

WCF Secretary: Simon Child, 24 Woodgate Ave, Bury, LANCS, BL9 7RU.

Tel: 0161 761 1945, Fax: 0161 763 3221 (work). Secretary@WesternChanFellowship.org

Membership Secretary, NCF Subscriptions (£10. 50 per three issues), *Retreat Bookings* Peter Howard, 22 Butts Road, Chiseldon, Wiltshire, SN4 0NW, Tel 01793 740659 Retreats@WesternChanFellowship.org

Chair of the WCF: Hilary Richards, 8 Park Terrace, The Park, Nottingham, NG1 5DN,

Tel: 0115 9242075, Chair@WesternChanFellowship.org

Teacher of the WCF: Dr John Crook, Winterhead Hill Farm, Shipham, N. Somerset, BS25 1RS, Teacher@WesternChanFellowship.org

NCF Editor: Marian Partington, Ty Lottyn, Llawr y glyn, Caersws, Powys SY17 5RJ, Editor@WesternChanFellowship.org

WCF Treasurer: Jake Lyne, 13 Belle Vue Terrace, York, YO10 5AZ, Treasurer@WesternChanFellowship.org

RETREAT BOOKING FORM – PLEASE PHOTOCOPY

To: Peter Howard
 WCF Membership Secretary
 22 Butts Rd
 Chiseldon
 Wilts SN4 0NW
 United Kingdom



I would like to book a place on the following retreat:

Date of application:

Retreat Name		Start Date		End Date	
--------------	--	------------	--	----------	--

My personal details are as follows [PLEASE PRINT]:

Name		Home/Contact phone no.	
Address		Mobile phone no.	
		Fax	
		Email address	
		Sex:	M / F
Post Code		Date of Birth:	

Please indicate how you will be travelling to the retreat. If you tick the “Able to give a lift” box, then your contact details will be given to those people who need a lift. If you do not want your details to be given out in this way, then please tick “Need a lift” and ignore the contact list you receive. The contact list will be sent out with the final information letter about 1 month before the retreat. The origin of retreat attendees is random and no guarantee can be made that a lift will be available even if you request one.

Able to give a lift
 Need a lift

Previous retreat experience:
Special dietary requirements:
Any other requirements:

To book a retreat, complete the form and send with a deposit to the Western Chan Fellowship Membership Secretary at the address above. **Applications without a deposit will not be accepted**

- For UK applicants the deposit is £80 (£50 if applying for a bursary).
- For applicants from outside the UK the deposit is €200 or \$200 (or £150).
- **The deposit is non-refundable** if you cancel or change your booking within 4 weeks of the start of the retreat.

Please make UK Sterling cheques payable to the ‘Western Chan Fellowship’. In order to minimise bank charges for both parties, overseas applicants should send their deposit as a bank note[s] for any of the above amounts. This will be converted at the prevailing exchange rate on the day of receipt. Any risk of loss of currency in the post is your risk.