

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter 15 - April 2005

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

Whither the Western Chan Fellowship?

At our recent group leaders retreat and the subsequent AGM we had some very interesting discussions on possible future directions for the WCF. John refers to these in his editorial in New Chan Forum 31. Several questions were raised, amongst them:

- Where does the future of the WCF lie? Is it in buildings and institutions such as developing our own residential and/or educational centre(s), or in spreading our activities across the regions by holding retreats and other events in locally rented properties? Or maybe in some combination of these visions, developing our regional presence but also developing a central 'presence' of some sort. Or maybe we should simply continue as before, with our focus on intensive retreats at Maenllwyd which are supported by weekly local meditation groups?
- Should we encourage and facilitate a greater degree of networking between our retreat-based activities and our dispersed and somewhat disparate local groups? This links into the ideas of holding more retreats in the regions, and of more cooperation and cross-linking between different groups, which could be supported by more visits from teachers.
- Anyway, what is the WCF? When someone becomes a Fellow of WCF, does that simply mean that they are expressing support for the activities of the WCF (which is how we have regarded it up until now), or does it perhaps mean that they are formally joining a Sangha? And if the latter, what is the nature and tradition of that Sangha? Should there be rites of passage, such as a formal ceremony of taking precepts, if we interpret joining in this manner? And so on.

These are not simple matters to be decided by a committee meeting or even by an AGM. We need to hear the voices of all fellows, and also indeed of would-be fellows and of non-fellows who are 'consumers' of our activities, as to how they see the nature, purpose, and development of the WCF shaping up as it moves towards its tenth birthday. Please communicate your views and opinions, for any of the above and any other matters that arise. You could do this by contacting any of the committee members, or by feeding back the discussions within your local groups. A good way would be to join and participate, or even just to observe, in the email discussion group *wcf-talk* (details on page 2) where there has already started to be some discussion on these topics.

We hope to improve the flows of information which may inform this discussion, e.g. the secretary will try to make available summaries of the proceedings of such events as the leaders retreats – when this is organised it will be announced via the mailing lists and website.

New Year – New Arrivals

Two fellows of WCF announce new arrivals to their families. Sophie Muir's second son 'Tashi' was born 6th January, and Stuart McLeod's firstborn 'Mari Caroline' arrived on 25th January. Our best wishes to them and their families.

WCF/BCG Sponsored Monk in Mustang

There has been correspondence between Dave and Aurie and the Monastic School in Mustang where WCF and Bristol Chan Group are jointly sponsoring a monk. The monks want to visit UK to demonstrate their dancing and sand mandalas. The councils of both Newbury and Reading have shown an interest and may provide some sponsorship, so this might actually happen. Contact Dave or Aurie McKay in Newbury for up-to-date news. auridev@wildmail.com Tel 01635 46139.

WCF Electronic Mailing Lists

The WCF operates some electronic mailing lists, and you may be interested in the purpose of these and how to operate them.

What are they?

'*wcfannounce*' is an announcement only mailing list. Only members of the WCF committee may make announcements via this list. It is reserved for WCF announcements only such as the publication of a new retreat programme or a significant update to the website, and is not used for discussion, so your inbox will not be overloaded by it. Hence we encourage all email users to subscribe to this mailing list so as to be able to receive any announcements as soon as they are made instead of waiting for the next newsletter to be distributed.

'*wcf-talk*' is a discussion mailing list. This is open to the members of the list to initiate and follow up on topics for discussion. So far it has been lightly used but it has potential for facilitating discussions on various topics e.g. our recent considerations of networking and what is meant by fellowship. This is an 'open' mailing list (anyone may join and participate - it is not limited to WCF fellows only) and it is not moderated. However if it were to be abused in the future then the secretary has the power to block subscriptions and to convert it to a moderated list, so don't be afraid to join in.

There are two other 'closed' mailing lists, one for the local group leaders, and one to facilitate communication between committee members in-between committee meetings.

How it works

When you are a member of a mailing list then whenever someone posts a message to the list then the message is automatically copied to all members of the list. For an announcement-only list such as *wcfannounce* this means that you will automatically receive by email all announcements posted to the list by the WCF secretary.

For a discussion group such as *wcf-talk*, any subscriber can post a message which will then be redistributed to all other subscribers. If anyone posts a reply to the original message then their reply is also copied to all subscribers, and hence a group discussion can take place. [If you want to send a private message to the person who sent the message then don't just hit 'Reply' - if you do that then your 'private' message will still be sent to everyone on the mailing list!]

Especially when lightly-used a mailing list has advantages over a web forum, but it may be that some of you are more familiar with a forum and would prefer this medium. The secretary is considering linking the mailing lists to a forum so as to give you a choice over how you access the discussions.

How to subscribe

You can subscribe or unsubscribe by yourself. To subscribe or unsubscribe send a blank email to the appropriate address. There is no need to type in a subject or any content - you may do so if you wish but it will be ignored by the mailing list software.

To subscribe to *wcfannounce* send the blank email to:

- wcfannounce-subscribe@westernchanfellowship.org

To unsubscribe send a blank email to:

- wcfannounce-unsubscribe@westernchanfellowship.org

Likewise for *wcf-talk* the addresses to use are:

- wcf-talk-subscribe@westernchanfellowship.org
- wcf-talk-unsubscribe@westernchanfellowship.org

When creating a new subscription you will receive an email with a link for you to click to confirm that you really do want to subscribe. Do this and then you will be added to the list (This step is required as a spam protection measure).

If you get stuck with anything to do with the mailing lists then please contact the secretary at secretary@westernchanfellowship.org

Local Groups News

There are **new WCF groups in Stroud** led by Alec Lawless 01453 873877 or email stroud@westernchanfellowship.org and in **Newcastle Emlyn (Camarthen)** led by Eric Johns 01559 370875 or email newcastleemlyn@westernchanfellowship.org

There a **new group starting soon in Cambridge** – keep an eye on the website for news of this.

For various reasons the **London, Aberystwyth and Totnes groups** have closed down. The London group is reforming at a new venue and the contact there (see below) can tell you the current arrangements.

Glastonbury Group. Now meeting weekly on Mondays, it has a general Buddhist meeting to start the evening and follows this with a Chan meditation session. glastonbury.westernchanfellowship.org

York Group. This group meets on Monday evenings 7.30 - 10.00 pm and Thursday mornings 7am - 8am. It holds regular one-day retreats, the next being 16th April. york.westernchanfellowship.org

Contacts

In some areas we don't currently have active groups but there are people who are willing to be contacts for those areas and they may be able to put you in touch with local activities or others who may be interested in forming a group. Contact the secretary if you want to be listed as a contact for your area.

- **Nottingham**, Hilary Richards, 0115 924 2075, nottingham@westernchanfellowship.org
- **South Devon**, Pete Lowry, 01364 643560, southdevon@westernchanfellowship.org
- **Aberystwyth**, Ken Jones, 01970 880603, aberystwyth@westernchanfellowship.org
- **London**, Peter Williams, 020 78284235, london@westernchanfellowship.org
- **Edinburgh**, Frank Tait, 01721 721146, edinburgh@westernchanfellowship.org

Retreats at Other Centres

Besides the Maenllwyd Retreat Programme, and the regular events organised by local groups in their own cities, there are other activities worth noting.

Several local groups are now organising day and weekend retreats, sometimes under their own leadership and sometimes with invited teachers. Mostly these are not residential but notably the events organised by Stuart McLeod at Hourne Farm are residential weekends and perhaps these illustrate the potential for extending our retreat programme regionally as discussed at the recent leaders retreat and mentioned on page one of this newsletter.

Simon and Hilary have led weekend retreats at Gaia House and have been invited once again to take part in next year's Gaia House programme.

Perhaps the majority of us tend to focus on activities in the UK, but both the WCF and of course Chan itself have connections beyond the borders of the UK. We have a fully affiliated WCF group in Oslo, and several contacts and activities in other countries. Last year John led retreats in Poland (July), Norway (October), and this coming year John is likely once again to be going to Poland in July and Simon plans to go to Norway in October. Also, last September both John and Simon attended the European Buddhist Teachers conference in Germany, and Simon hopes to attend again the event again this September when it will be held in Poland. John is leading a journey to India in September, and plans are in the making for John to lead a retreat in Lithuania in the Summer of 2006.

Western Zen Retreat in New York

During March 11th – 16th 2005 John, Simon, and Hilary led a Western Zen Retreat at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center (www.dharmadrumretreat.org) in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York, USA. This is the third time in four years that we have held a Western Zen Retreat there, and we have already been invited to return again next year. It seems to be well received and appreciated and as the news spreads the numbers increase. This time we had 27 participants, which is probably the largest Western Zen Retreat ever held given the limitations on capacity at Maenllwyd!

Western Chan Fellowship Retreats

The following events are scheduled at the Maenllwyd during the rest of 2005

April 30 th – May 21 st	Three Week Retreat	<i>Fully Booked</i>
Aug 25 th – 30 th	*Introductory Chan Retreat*	Hilary Richards £190
October 14 th – 19 th	*Western Zen Retreat*	Simon Child £190
November 12 th – 18 th	Koan Retreat	John Crook £215
December 9 th – 14 th	Mahamudra	John Crook £190

** indicates suitable for beginners **

This programme is subject to changes, cancellations, and additions. Updates will be posted on our website at westernchanfellowship.org/retreats/ where you can view the full programme details. Enquiries: Bookings@WesternChanFellowship.org, Tel 0161 491 0612.

Important: Changes to Retreat Booking Arrangements

There are two important changes to be announced regarding retreat bookings.

1. The retreat booking address has changed

Bookings must now be sent to Ron Henshall. Please use the new booking form (on the back page of this newsletter, and at westernchanfellowship.org/retreats/) and send it to the new bookings address.

2. Retreat fees must now be paid in full by six weeks before the retreat starts

- If you book more than six weeks ahead then you may secure your place with either full payment or a deposit of £80.
- If you book within six weeks of the start of the retreat then you must pay in full at the time of booking.
- **If your balance payment is not received by six weeks before the start of the retreat then your deposit may be forfeit and your place transferred to someone else on the waiting list.**
- If after booking you find you cannot attend and give at least six weeks notice of cancellation then both your deposit and any balance/full payment will be refunded in full.
- **If you cancel within six weeks of the retreat, or do not turn up for the retreat, then your fees are forfeited.** If we are able to refill your place from the waiting list then your balance will be refunded and only the deposit is forfeited.

These changes are to minimise wastage of places on retreat, given the limited capacity of our retreats. It is a shame when our retreats have waiting lists and we have to turn people away, only to find that we have late cancellations or 'no-shows' and those turned away could have been accepted if we had sufficient notice of non-attenders. Please give good notice if you are unable to attend.

Bursaries (Concessions) for Low or No-Waged Applicants

The WCF is a registered charity and has received donations to a bursary fund to help non-waged or low income persons to attend WCF retreats. There are a limited number of bursary places per retreat. Financial support will vary according to the applicant's needs, but typically a discount of 50% of the retreat fee is available. If you would like to apply for bursary-funded support to attend a WCF retreat please write to the membership secretary giving details of your requirements,.

- **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 wish to donate to the bursary fund or to other WCF projects. The WCF is a registered charity and is registered with the Inland Revenue for Gift Aid and for Payroll Giving, so if you are a tax-payer your donation can be accepted by these tax-efficient methods.

Other Forthcoming UK Events

Weekend Retreats in East Sussex

The South-East groups will hold two residential weekend retreats this year:

- August 12-14, **Emotional Awareness**, with Ken Jones
- November 11th – 13th, **Introduction to Chan**, led by Hilary Richards.

They have rebooked the excellent venue that they have used previously, Hourne Farm in East Sussex. Fees £70 (£45 concessions). Contact Stuart McLeod medwaytowns@westernchanfellowship.org Tel 01634 571659, for bookings or further details.

Bristol. (Details nearer the time at www.bristol-chan.co.uk):

- May 1st Spring Walk, in Glastonbury jointly with the Glastonbury Chan Group;
- June 4th - 5th, non-residential short retreat with teacher Rob Preece, a former monk in a Tibetan tradition;
- Sept 17th - 18th non-residential short retreat with the Rev Saido Kennaway from Telford Buddhist priory (Order of Buddhist Contemplatives).

Manchester. Day retreat details are posted on the website manchester.westernchanfellowship.org

Glastonbury. Occasional day retreats, next on 10th April. glastonbury.westernchanfellowship.org

Newbury. Meditation days: Sunday 29th May and Sunday 21st August. Join us for some focused sitting practice in Newbury. Beautiful garden for walking meditation, weather permitting. 11am to 4pm, bring lunch to share. For details contact Dave/Aurie 01635 46139, or Susan 07958 574524.

Swindon. Sunday 19th June, a half-day retreat, 2pm to 5.30pm. Contact Mick Webb 01793 436799.

York. Regular one-day retreats, the next being 16th April. york.westernchanfellowship.org

Gaia House: Simon Child and Hilary Richards have been invited once again to take part in the Gaia House retreat programme, probably by leading a weekend retreat in January 2006. Gaia House can be contacted Tel 01626 333613 www.gaiahouse.co.uk

Retreats Outside UK

Poland, Lithuania: John Crook may be leading a retreat in Poland in July 2005, and perhaps Lithuania in 2006. teacher@westernchanfellowship.org Phone/Fax 01934 842231 Evenings.

Norway. Simon Child plans to lead a retreat in Norway in late October / early November. A few places are available free of charge for participants from other countries, and such visitors will be welcome to stay a day or two extra in Oslo with members of the Norwegian group. Contact Bryn oslo@westernchanfellowship.org or consult www.hridaya.no for more information.

New York, USA: There will likely be another Western Zen Retreat in New York in Spring 2006 – keep an eye on www.dharmadrumretreat.org

Solitary Retreats

westernchanfellowship.org/retreats/solitary_retreats.html describes several opportunities.

Free Solitary Retreats at Winterhead House

During the three week retreat John Crook offers Winterhead Retreat House to a solitary retreatant who will act as Caretaker for the property during his absence. No charge will be made for this retreat. The form of the retreat will be agreed in advance and conform to the specifications for Solitary Retreats already published.

In addition John is sometimes away abroad and during these times free Caretaking Retreats may be offered. If you wish to take advantage of these offers please contact John (teacher@westernchanfellowship.org). Enquiries will be gratefully received.

Further information on Winterhead House and the facilities for solitary retreats are available here: westernchanfellowship.org/retreats/winterhead.html

A Lotus in Bloom - Art by Buddhists in the West

Network of Buddhist Organisations Arts Festival, June 11th - 26th 2005

Opening conference in Birmingham, June 11th. Events up and down the country including Zen calligraphy, Haiku performance and workshop, graphic arts, storytelling and performance arts. For further details please see the NBO website www.nbo.org.uk nearer the time.

Publications

Song of Mind

Master Sheng-yen has a new book now available – “Song of Mind”. It follows the successful format used for several of his previous books, by taking a series of retreat talks and compiling and editing them into one volume. These talks are a commentary on the poem “Song of Mind”.

westernchanfellowship.org/reading/books.html#som

Illuminating Silence – Available at Discount Pricing

The WCF has bought a stock of the book “Illuminating Silence” and is now able to sell it at £8.99 which is less than the cover price and also includes free UK postage and packing. This is a key book for us, including as it does the teachings at two Maenllwyd retreats with Master Sheng Yen on the method of Silent Illumination, and also other texts and retreat reports by John Crook. To order your copy (everyone should have at least one!) send payment to Jake Lyne (WCF treasurer), cheques payable to “Western Chan Fellowship”. Most local group leaders also have a stock of copies so you can purchase directly from them.

westernchanfellowship.org/reading/books.html#is

New Chan Forum

The journal of the Western Chan Fellowship is called “New Chan Forum”. It has been published two or three issues per year since 1990 and has now reached issue 31. It is available by subscription to the printed version (send £10.50 to the membership secretary for a subscription of three issues, stating which from which issue you wish your subscription to commence, cheques payable to Western Chan Fellowship), or free of charge from the website NCF page at westernchanfellowship.org/ncf/

Call for Articles and Artwork

We always welcome submissions of articles and artwork or photographs for consideration for inclusion in New Chan Forum. We don't promise to publish or even acknowledge everything that we receive, but please do send us anything you think may be of interest to others – serious critical articles, humorous items, poems, drawings, photographs, reports of events, book reviews, etc. Send articles to editorial@WesternChanFellowship.org or by post to John Crook. Send artwork to Simon Child.

Data Protection Notice – Please Read

The WCF maintains a computer database of our contacts, which is used for keeping you informed of Western Chan Fellowship activities, e.g. for mailings such as this one, and for notifying local group leaders of possible contacts in their vicinity.

Please notify the Membership Secretary if you do not wish your details to be kept on a computer database or if you do not want to receive any further mailings.

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 Sheng Yen. Chan Master Sheng Yen is the Abbot of two monasteries in Taiwan and head of the Institutes of Chung Hwa Buddhist Culture in Taiwan and New York.

Master Sheng Yen 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 Sheng Yen 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 Sheng Yen, we have a tradition on which we can rely. John Crook received Dharma transmission from Master Sheng Yen 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

Associated Groups

Cardiff Eddy Street 029 2069 1146

Guildford Roger Taylor 01483 202422

Newbury Dave/Aurie McKay 01635 46139

See the website for more details of local groups
e.g. websites and email addresses

Affiliated Groups

Bristol Sally Mashedor 0117 924 8819

Glastonbury Ned Reiter 01458 833663

Lizard Sophie Muir 01326 221651

Manchester Simon Child 0161 761 1945

Medway Towns Stuart McLeod 01634 571659

Newcastle Emlyn Eric Johns 01559 370875

Oslo Bryn Risnes + 47 9756 3317

Stroud Alec Lawless 01453 873877

Swindon Hughie Carroll 01793 343447

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** Ron Henshall, 15 St Davids Road, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 2HE, Retreats@WesternChanFellowship.org

Chair of the WCF: Eddy Street, 19 Velindre, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF10 2TE, Tel: 029 2069 1146, 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

To: Ron Henshall
 WCF Membership Secretary
 15 St Davids Road
 Cheadle
 Cheshire
 SK8 2HE

IMPORTANT NOTE: The address to the left is the NEW ADDRESS FOR BOOKINGS and BOOKINGS SENT TO THE OLD ADDRESS MAY BE DELAYED OR LOST.



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

Retreat Name		Start Date		End Date	
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My personal details are as follows [PLEASE PRINT]:

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

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).
- **To secure your place the retreat fee balance must be received 6 weeks before the retreat starts.** If applying within 6 weeks of the start date then send payment in full at booking. **If your balance payment is not received by six weeks before the start of the retreat then your deposit may be forfeit and your place transferred to someone else on the waiting list.**
- **The fee is non-refundable** if you cancel or change your booking within 6 weeks of the start of the retreat. If we are able to refill your cancelled place from the waiting list then only the deposit is forfeited and the balance will be refunded.

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.

The current version of this retreat booking form is available at westernchanfellowship.org/retreats/