

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter 17 – Summer 2007

Local Groups News

There is a **new group in London** – contact Kitty D’costa email: London@westernchanfellowship.org, or see www.westernchanfellowship.org/london

The **Mid-Wales Group** has reformed – contact John Senior 0781 346 2880 midwales@westernchanfellowship.org or see www.westernchanfellowship.org/midwales

Retreat Programme

Please see inside the retreat programme for the remainder of 2007, which includes some new types of event. The booking instructions and application form are on the back two pages of this newsletter. We also list some local group events.

Donations

As a registered charity we subsidise retreat fees for students and low-waged through our bursary scheme, and of course we welcome donations to support our bursary fund and other projects. We are able to accept donations through various charitable mechanisms including CAF and Payroll giving. Please consider asking your employer whether they support Payroll Giving (“Give As You Earn”). This is an easy and tax-effective way to make a regular donation to support the work of the WCF. A small regular donation is worthwhile and appreciated since it provides an ongoing top-up to our funds. The WCF is registered with the scheme and our number is 000435969. More details at www.giveasyouearn.org and www.westernchanfellowship.org/donations.html.

Notes from the NBO

May 2007

Having recently submitted a report to the AGM of the Western Chan Fellowship, there is not much to add at present. Our programme for the coming year has yet to be decided. I would like to draw your attention to our web site which can be found at www.nbo.org.uk. In particular, I suggest you take a look at the button headed ‘Resources’ on the left-hand side.

There you will find links to a wide variety of different topics. The only linking theme is that we feel that somebody may be interested in these items and that this information should be in the public domain. Topics include the International Dunhuang Project, changing regulations on immigration, how to design a funeral and how to handle the media in a multifaith society. Also included are items on electronic learning, a translation of the Dhammapada, teaching materials for schools from Clear Vision Trust and the tapes of a meeting held on Ordination. The tapes from the meeting on Women in Buddhism will be posted there shortly. There is also a section with some jokes and general fun, as well as links to other Buddhist directories.

Do take a look at it and let your friends know that this resource is available. If you know of material which you feel should similarly be available in a public space, please send it to me and if we can we will include it. Sally Masheder, secretary@nbo.org.uk 0845 345 8978

Sponsor a Sutra!

Invitation to sponsor publications of the International Dunhuang Project <http://idp.bl.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 30 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 Koan retreats are open to those who have already attended a Western Zen Retreat or have relevant prior retreat experience elsewhere (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.

Maenllwyd Retreat Centre

Maenllwyd is an old farm building, several hundred years old in parts, in a remote valley in mid-Wales. Modernisation extends only to the provision of mains water. 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 all 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.

Unfortunately Maenllwyd is not suitable for wheelchair access and several other disabilities. We have a disability access statement which may be obtained from the membership secretary before making your retreat booking, so as to check whether or not we shall be able to accommodate you.

Retreats for the Remainder of 2007

June 24th – 30th **FOLLOW YOUR NATURE AND ACCORD WITH THE WAY** Retreatants will be invited each to select passages from the classic Zen scripture the Hsin-Hsin-Ming -- On Trust in the Heart. The passages will be those which they feel have a strong relevance to the state of their personal practice and life situations. Outdoor meditations and compassion yoga will be woven into the retreat. Suitable for both beginners and old hands. £245 *Leader: Ken Jones.*

Aug 18th– 23rd **FIVE DAY CHAN RETREAT** The five-day Chan Retreat is similar in format to the full Silent Illumination Retreat, based on the teachings of Master Sheng-yen, and the teachings of the Western Chan Fellowship. It is suitable for beginners, and for experienced practitioners who are unable to commit to the full seven days. There will be an emphasis on Silent Illumination practice, though you may prefer to work with the breath, and experienced practitioners who are already working with a Hua-tou may continue with that practice. Practice will be supported through meditation instruction, mindfulness in daily activity, community in silence, Dharma talks and personal interviews, together with all of the other features of a Maenllwyd Retreat. £200 *Leaders: Fiona Nuttall*

October 6th - 11th **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. £200 *Leader: Hilary Richards.*

November 10th – 17th **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. £290 *Leader: John Crook.*

December 7th – 12th **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. Previous experience of either a Western Zen Retreat or Chan retreat is required. £200 *Leader: John Crook.*

- 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-length retreats finish after breakfast on the last day, shorter retreats either mid-morning or after lunch. Full details and directions are sent on booking.

Other Forthcoming UK Events

Hourne Farm, East Sussex Stuart McLeod continues to organize retreats held at Hourne Farm near Crowborough.

Taking the Backward Step, October 18th - 21st, is a shortened version of the successful retreat held at the Maenllwyd last year. For those who missed it, and for those who would like to deepen their understanding. We shall apply key phrases from the teachings to our own life situations, as well as enjoying Dogen's poetry. Leader: Ken Jones. £110 / £80 concession.

Ken Jones is a Zen teacher and writer of many years standing. His haiku and haibun appear regularly in specialist journals, plus his three published titles. He is a co-editor of "Contemporary Haibun" and has been awarded the Sasakawa prize for his contribution to the genre.

Cost: £110 / £80 concession. For more information phone Ken on 01970 880603, or to book call Stuart McLeod on 01634 571659 or email: medwaytowns@westernchanfellowship.org

Newbury: The Newbury Chan Group will be holding a one-day practice session on Sunday 15 July, from 10.00 to 16.00. Bring a light lunch to share. We hope the weather will allow us to enjoy some time in the beautiful garden of our Newbury venue

Bristol. Event details are posted at www.bristolchan.co.uk

Manchester. Day retreat details are posted at www.westernchanfellowship.org/manchester

Glastonbury. Occasional day retreats. www.westernchanfellowship.org/glastonbury

York. Event details are posted at www.westernchanfellowship.org/york

Retreats outside UK

New York, USA: There will be another Western Zen Retreat in New York in September. Whilst the main purpose of these US events is to introduce the WZR to Americans they do also accept overseas applications, and it is good to have some 'old-hands' participating as well as newcomers so please feel free to apply – application details are posted under 'Activities' at www.dharmadrumretreat.org

Solitary Retreats

www.westernchanfellowship.org/solitary-retreats.html describes several opportunities.

Free Solitary Retreats at Winterhead House

John is sometimes away abroad and during these times free 'Caretaking/House-Sitting' Retreats may be offered. If you wish to take advantage of these offers please contact John (teacher@westernchanfellowship.org Phone/Fax 01934 842231). Enquiries will be gratefully received.

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

Publications

Attaining the Way

Master Sheng-yen has a new book available – “Attaining the Way”. 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”.

www.westernchanfellowship.org/books-shengyen-crook.html#atw

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.

www.westernchanfellowship.org/books-shengyen-crook.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 35. It is available by subscription to the printed version (send £12.00 to the membership secretary for a subscription of three issues, stating 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: *www.westernchanfellowship.org/new-chan-forum.html*

Mailing Lists

This paper newsletter is published infrequently, but you can receive more timely news by subscribing to our e-newsletter. This is an announcement only mailing-list, (not a discussion group). To subscribe, send an email to *wcfannounce-subscribe@westernchanfellowship.org* and respond to the confirmation request that should come back to you.

We also have a discussion mailing list where you may converse with other practitioners: To subscribe send an email to *wcf-talk-subscribe@westernchanfellowship.org*

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

AFFILIATED GROUPS

Cambridge David Brown 07766 686 345

Glastonbury Ned Reiter 01458 833663

Manchester Simon Child 0161 761 1945

Mid-Wales John Senior 0781 346 2880

South Devon, Pete Lowry, 01364 643560

Swindon Hugh Carroll 01793 436799

Bristol Sally Mashedor 0117 924 8819

Cardiff Rob Stratton 029 20 229 376

Lizard Sophie Muir 01326 221651

Medway Towns Stuart McLeod 01634 571659

Nottingham Hilary Richards, 0115 924 2075

Stroud Alec Lawless 01453 873877

York Jannie Mead, Jake Lyne 01904 628536

ASSOCIATED GROUPS

London Kitty D'Costa

London@westernchanfellowship.org

Newcastle Emlyn Eric Johns 01559 370875

Guildford Roger Taylor 01483 202422

Newbury Dave/Aurie McKay 01635 46139

Portsmouth George Marsh 023 9235 7783

OVERSEAS

Oslo Bryn Risnes + 47 9756 3317

LOCAL CONTACTS

Aberystwyth, Ken Jones, 01970 880603, aberystwyth@westernchanfellowship.org

Edinburgh, Frank Tait, 01721 721146, edinburgh@westernchanfellowship.org

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: 0845 869 4265 Secretary@WesternChanFellowship.org

Membership Secretary, NCF Subscriptions, Retreat Bookings: Hugh Carroll, 36 Prospect Hill, Swindon, Wilts, SN1 3JS, Tel 01793 436799 Retreats@WesternChanFellowship.org

Chair of the WCF: Eddy Street, 19 Velindre Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF10 2TE,

Tel: 029 20 691146, Chair@WesternChanFellowship.org

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

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

Retreat Booking Arrangements

Important Information on Booking a Retreat Place:

1. Before booking be sure to understand the nature of the event: read the retreat descriptions, read the description of Maenllwyd Retreat Centre, and you may also find it helpful to read more of the information (e.g. retreat reports submitted by past retreat participants) on our website at www.westernchanfellowship.org

2. The retreat booking address changed on 11th February 2007.

Bookings must now be sent to Hugh Carroll. Please use the new booking form (on the back page of this newsletter, and at www.westernchanfellowship.org/retreat-booking.html) and send it to the new bookings address.

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

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), or double this if applying for two or three weeks of a two or three-week retreat. For applicants from outside the UK the deposit is €200 or \$200 (or £150), or double this if applying for two or three weeks of a two or three-week retreat.
- **Payment of the balance is required by 6 weeks before the start of the retreat, or else your place may be given to someone else.**
- **If you do not turn up for the retreat, then your fees are forfeited. If you cancel within six weeks of the retreat, and we are unable to refill your place from the waiting list, then your fees are forfeited.** If we are able to refill the place from the waiting list then your fees will be refunded in full. In exceptional circumstances at our discretion we may give refunds outside these terms. If you have holiday insurance and cancel for medical reasons you may be able to claim on your insurance.

These payment arrangements are to minimise wastage of places, 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 Students and 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. www.westernchanfellowship.org/donations.html

RETREAT BOOKING FORM

Return To:
 Hugh Carroll
 36 Prospect Hill
 Swindon
 Wilts
 SN1 3JS

The WCF maintains a computer database of our contacts, which is used for keeping you informed of Western Chan Fellowship activities and for notifying local group leaders of possible contacts in their vicinity. Please tick 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.

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:

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- **If you do not turn up for the retreat, then your fees are forfeited. If you cancel within six weeks of the retreat, and we are unable to refill your place from the waiting list, then your fees are forfeited.** If we are able to refill the place from the waiting list then your fees will be refunded in full. In exceptional circumstances at our discretion we may give refunds outside these terms. If you have holiday insurance and cancel for medical reasons you may be able to claim on your insurance.

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.