



www.westernchanfellowship.org

December 2016

NEWSLETTER 32

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP NEWS AND PROGRAMMES

Welcome to Newsletter 32. This includes our full 2017 retreat programme and also brings you news of other WCF activities.

In the previous newsletter we showed you photos of a new venue we are to use in Merseyside. We have also booked another new venue for a February 'Taste of Chan' retreat. Hagg Farm Outdoor Education Centre provides comfortable residential accommodation within the buildings and grounds of a converted 19th Century hill farm. Walks from the door of the centre lead onto the high moors of Kinder and Bleaklow and around the Ladybower reservoirs and dams. There is ample car parking at the Centre for those travelling by car, and for those using public transport it is only 6 miles from Bamford railway station on the Manchester-Sheffield line. The centre provides very pleasant accommodation and has disabled facilities.



In addition to our residential retreats there are many other opportunities for you to practise with us, such as at local group events and day retreats (see page 6-7). You may also wish to participate in events led by WCF leaders at other venues outside the WCF programme such as at Gaia House in June and in Europe or USA (see page 6).

We are also introducing new types of events (see details inside) such as a stone carving and meditation course and Chinese brush painting. In March in Bristol there will be a seminar with Stephen Batchelor on "Early Buddhism and the Four Great Vows".

2017 Programme of retreats and other events

PLEASE REFER TO THE WEBSITE AT WWW.W-C-F.ORG/Q342 FOR THE LATEST UPDATES AND MORE DETAILS.

7TH – 14TH JANUARY: SILENT ILLUMINATION 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADERS: SIMON CHILD AND JAKE LYNE. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. It is the origin of the Japanese Soto Zen practice of Shikantaza but is approached somewhat differently and full instruction will be given.

This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness and compassion in everyday life.

13TH – 17TH FEBRUARY: A TASTE OF CHAN 4-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: HAGG FARM, DERBYSHIRE

An opportunity to experience the traditional style of a formal, silent Chan retreat over 5 days. The format includes sitting meditation, work practice, Chinese style exercises, and walking meditation both indoors and in the countryside around the venue.



The main methods of Chan practice will be introduced to participants, including calming and relaxation methods, the use of Silent Illumination and Koan/Gongan work. These methods will be explored experientially so that the practitioner can 'taste' for themselves the various styles and see which they feel affinity with.

The retreat will be rigorous with early starts and intensive periods of meditation each day. It is an opportunity to experience personal silence in a place of nature and to discover more about ourselves in the space that silence creates. There will be instructional talks each day and opportunities for exploration of the application of mindfulness in everyday activity as we share the experience of the time together.

25TH FEBRUARY – 2ND MARCH: WESTERN ZEN 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-day retreat you will investigate the question "Who am I?" within a standard retreat framework, using silent meditation in conjunction with a unique method of verbal inquiry. This format allows you to use words to go beyond words and thereby enter the main gate of Chan.

The intensive nature of this process of inquiry drives each practitioner into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. To guide and support you, personal interviews with the teachers are offered regularly throughout the retreat. With whole-hearted engagement this retreat may lead to the acceptance of self, the experience of "self at ease," and may even provide an opportunity for direct insight into the ground of being.

11TH – 18TH MARCH: SILENT ILLUMINATION 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. It is the origin of the Japanese Soto Zen practice of Shikantaza but is approached somewhat differently and full instruction will be given.

This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness and compassion in everyday life.

1ST – 8TH APRIL: SHATTERING THE GREAT DOUBT 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.



29TH APRIL – 4TH MAY: WESTERN ZEN 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-day retreat you will investigate the question "Who am I?" within a standard retreat framework, using silent meditation in conjunction with a unique method of verbal inquiry. This format allows you to use words to go beyond words and thereby enter the main gate of Chan.

The intensive nature of this process of inquiry drives each practitioner into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. To guide and support you, personal interviews with the teachers are offered regularly throughout the retreat. With whole-hearted engagement this retreat may lead to the acceptance of self, the experience of "self at ease," and may even provide an opportunity for direct insight into the ground of being.

14TH – 21ST MAY: CONNECTED PRACTICE: ENHANCE YOUR PRACTICE IN YOUR OWN ENVIRONMENT

CO-ORDINATOR: HILARY RICHARDS

Join us in a commitment for a period of connected and enhanced practice. We will undertake this in our daily lives, whether at home or in the workplace, with the silent support of knowing that we are not practising alone. We intend to raise the tempo of our practice for this period, increasing our capacity to be aware in our daily lives. A Mindfulness Bell will be rung at noon every day, when all participants may pause and be joined in the silence that the bell marks. Members of our Sangha may use this opportunity in different and creative ways. Open to all. To join in email: connected-practice@westernchanfellowship.org. More information at: <http://w-c-f.org/Q372-397>

27TH MAY – 3RD JUNE: SILENT ILLUMINATION 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: BALA BROOK RETREAT CENTRE, DEVON

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. It is the origin of the Japanese Soto Zen practice of Shikantaza but is approached somewhat differently and full instruction will be given.



This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness and compassion in everyday life.

29TH JULY – 3RD AUGUST: WESTERN ZEN 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-day retreat you will investigate the question "Who am I?" within a standard retreat framework, using silent meditation in conjunction with a unique method of verbal inquiry. This format allows you to use words to go beyond words and thereby enter the main gate of Chan.

The intensive nature of this process of inquiry drives each practitioner into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. To guide and support you, personal interviews with the teachers are offered regularly throughout the retreat. With whole-hearted engagement this retreat may lead to the acceptance of self, the experience of "self at ease," and may even provide an opportunity for direct insight into the ground of being.

**19TH – 26TH AUGUST: SHATTERING THE GREAT DOUBT
7-NIGHT RETREAT**

**LEADER: SIMON CHILD AND FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE:
CROSBY HALL EDUCATIONAL TRUST, LIVERPOOL**

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental



assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience. This venue <http://www.chetcentre.org.uk> has a larger capacity than our usual retreats so do come and join us for this summer retreat.

8TH – 17TH SEPTEMBER: SILENT ILLUMINATION 9-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. It is the origin of the Japanese Soto Zen practice of Shikantaza but is approached somewhat differently and full instruction will be given.

This nine-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness and compassion in everyday life.

30TH SEPTEMBER – 5TH OCTOBER: AWARENESS IN THE EVERYDAY - WORKING WITH WHAT ARISES

LEADER: HILARY RICHARDS. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

This workshop retreat will encourage everyday awareness as a fundamental Chan life practice. We will offer individual and group work to develop mindfulness allowing time for exploration and understanding of individual experience through the lens of meditation. Rising early each day, the retreat will also include teaching, silence, interviews and periods for exercise. Open to all.

28TH OCTOBER – 1ST NOVEMBER: RUNNING AND ZEN MEDITATION RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE, RETREAT LEADER, WITH STUART MCLEOD, ENDURANCE ATHLETE AND CHAN MEDITATION INSTRUCTOR. VENUE: BARMOOR, N. YORKS

This retreat has been designed with experienced runners in mind, who are interested in exploring the mutual benefits of training the body and training the mind. Our core focus will be to introduce participants to sitting meditation practice in the Chan (Chinese Zen) Buddhist tradition, including calming and relaxation methods, and extending these principles of awareness to movement through walking and running. The retreat is designed to offer a fully immersive experience and will include early starts and intensive periods of meditation each day.

With Barmoor retreat centre sitting in the North York Moors National Park, we have the perfect environment to run the trails through the beautiful Rosedale Valley. There will be extended periods of silence throughout the retreat, to enable us to focus our attention and engage with our surroundings. It is an opportunity to experience personal silence in a place of nature and to discover more about ourselves in the space that silence creates.

To discuss this event further please contact Stuart McLeod s.i.mcleod@blueyonder.co.uk 07913 858612.

11TH – 18TH NOVEMBER: SHATTERING THE GREAT DOUBT 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.

2ND – 7TH DECEMBER: WESTERN ZEN 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-day retreat you will investigate the question "Who am I?" within a standard retreat framework, using silent meditation in conjunction with a unique method of verbal inquiry. This format allows you to use words to go beyond words and thereby enter the main gate of Chan.

The intensive nature of this process of inquiry drives each practitioner into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. To guide and support you, personal interviews with the teachers are offered regularly throughout the retreat. With whole-hearted engagement this retreat may lead to the acceptance of self, the experience of "self at ease," and may even provide an opportunity for direct insight into the ground of being.

FOR INFORMATION

We list here some retreats which are outside the WCF programme but may be of interest to WCF retreatants.

SILENT ILLUMINATION RETREAT: POLAND 18TH – 25TH MARCH

Simon Child will lead retreat at Dłużew, near Warsaw, Poland. Teaching and interviews are in English, with Polish interpretation available if required. International applications welcomed. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1790>

SILENT ILLUMINATION RETREAT IN USA: MAY 27TH – JUNE 4TH

Simon Child and Rebecca Li will lead this retreat in late May at Dharma Drum Retreat Center, upstate New York. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1135>

INVESTIGATING KOANS AT GAIA HOUSE: UK JUNE 12TH – 17TH

Simon Child and Jake Lyne will lead this retreat at Gaia House. For details and booking visit the Gaia House website: <http://gaiahouse.co.uk/gh/retreat/investigating-koans/>

21-DAY CHAN RETREAT IN POLAND: JULY 30TH – AUGUST 20TH

Ven. Chi Chern Fashi will lead a 21-day Chan meditation retreat at Dłużew, near Warsaw, Poland. International applications welcomed. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1880>

WESTERN ZEN RETREAT RETREAT IN USA: OCTOBER 13TH – 18TH

Simon Child will lead this retreat with Rebecca Li and Hilary Richards in October at Dharma Drum Retreat Center, upstate New York. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1135>

DAY RETREATS AND OTHER LOCAL EVENTS

Several local groups arrange day retreats and other events from time to time.

See the website events page <http://w-c-f.org/Q342> and individual group pages at <http://w-c-f.org/Q3> for details of events.

Events known at the date of going to press are listed overleaf but please also contact your local group to be informed of other and future events:

Manchester Chan Group will hold a **day retreat** on Saturday 21st January. Details at <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-286>

Bristol Chan Group will hold a **day retreat** in Bristol on 22nd January led by Pat Simmons. We will be focusing particularly on loving kindness. Contact Pat: patsimmons.cet22@yahoo.com 0117 977 4683 / 07443 479363

Sleaford Chan Group is holding a day retreat in Lincolnshire on 23rd February, at their usual venue The Quaker Meeting House in Brant Broughton. They are also planning another **Chinese Brush Painting Day**, following the success of the previous event in November – this is provisionally booked for 3rd June. Contact Juliet: sleafordchan@westernchanfellowship.org for more details on either of these events.



Bristol: A seminar with Stephen Batchelor on Early Buddhism and the Four Great Vows. Saturday 4th March, Bristol. The earliest Buddhist teachings can be understood as offering a means to transform oneself and society. Stephen argues that the presentation of Noble 'Truths' is a later interpretation of the early teachings and tends to direct attention towards dogma, which was never the Buddha's intention. He argues that these teachings reveal the Buddha as a pragmatic ethicist rather than metaphysicist, and shows how the four Noble Truths can become four integrated practices for awakened living that can be practised moment to moment. Details at <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-297>

Exeter Chan Group Day Retreat, Sunday 19th March. Leader: Jake Lyne. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q603>
Contact: exeterchan@westernchanfellowship.org

Wiltshire, Stone Carving and Meditation Weekend. April 29th – 1st May. Henry Gray is the owner of Gray's Stone Carving Studio near Salisbury, where he teaches stone carving to all ages and abilities. He has been practising Chan with The Western Chan Fellowship for the last 10 years.



This course is suitable for beginners and experienced meditation practitioners, and beginners and experienced stone carvers. A focus of the course will be the 'doing' aspect of practice - on the bringing together of body and mind through a work practice. The three days will be interspersed with body exercises,

carving, sitting practice (zazen), walks and short talks. Although this is not a silent retreat, principles of a Chan (zen) retreat will be adopted, for example, there will be some liturgy, a short talk each day, some sitting practice (zazen) periods; however most of the 'formal' practice will be the 'work' periods. There will be plenty of short breaks and instruction on linking body and breath in activity, listening to the stone, tool handling skills and stone carving techniques.

The course is non-residential. Camping is available for free, or Henry can recommend local B&B's. Details at <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-288>

Lizard Chan Group, Cornwall: Fiona Nuttall will lead a weekend retreat at Roselidden Farm, Cornwall, 13th – 14th May. Contact Sophie Muir, Tel 01326 221651.

Forest of Dean Friday evening 19th May – Sunday 21st May, Hilary Richards will lead a weekend residential meditation retreat on an environmental theme. Joint organisation by the Bristol and Forest of Dean Chan groups either of whom can be contacted for further information.

NATIONAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

DIARY DATE: EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF WCF 28TH JANUARY 2017, IN BRISTOL

Details have been emailed to all full and associate members, and also posted to full members who are the ones eligible to vote on the resolutions at this meeting. If any member has not received the details please email secretary@westernchanfellowship.org who can send replacement papers.

DIARY DATE: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF WCF 6TH MAY 2017, IN BRISTOL

Details will be circulated nearer the time.

BUDDHIST ACTION MONTH

This year the theme for the Network of Buddhist Organisations (NBO) "Buddhist Action Month" (BAM), which will be held in June, is "Connecting for Change". BAM is a Buddhist festival of socially beneficial activities. NBO will be inviting people to take part and offering handbooks with ideas and guidance about organising an activity in their area. Please contact Juliet sleafordchan@westernchanfellowship.org for more information.

WCF ON YOUTUBE

Have you seen the WCF Youtube channel, with drone video of Maenllwyd and selected Dharma talks?

<https://www.youtube.com/user/WesternChan/videos>

TWIRL THAT PEN!

PLEASE SEND US MATERIAL FOR THE NEW CHAN FORUM

Articles: Any lively articles relevant to Chan learning and Chan living would be most welcome. We need to create the New Chan Forum for ourselves, in the way we want it to be. And please keep the retreat reports coming! They are very highly valued contributions to the understanding of the power of the retreat process.

Images, including artwork, drawings, photographs, and also poems, haiku and haibun would be very much appreciated.

If these or other ideas stimulate you then please contact the editor George Marsh, at editor@westernchanfellowship.org, who will be more than happy to discuss with you how any idea can be taken forward.

MAILINGS

If you no longer wish to receive postal mailings, please help us save printing and postage costs by notifying admin@westernchanfellowship.org