



westernchanfellowship.org

March 2020

NEWSLETTER 38

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP NEWS AND RETREAT PROGRAMME

Welcome to Newsletter 38. This includes news of our retreat programme and other WCF activities. Please refer to the website at www.w-c-f.org/Q342 for the latest updates and more details.

CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19

The pandemic is a rapidly changing situation and what we write here will be out of date by the time you read it. We are monitoring the situation and considering the impact on our activities.

Already all retreats during February to June have been cancelled to avoid the risk of virus transmission during retreat, and it is likely that some subsequent retreats will also be cancelled. We will advise anyone with bookings of any cancellation as soon as the decision has been made, and full refunds will be given automatically.

Our local groups have all suspended their face-to-face meetings. Each group is handling the situation differently with some doing more online activities and distance networking than others. Contact your local group leader to find out what is happening in your area.

This newsletter lists events that we would like to be able to run later this year, but we and you know that not all of these will go ahead. Look out for notices of amendments and cancellations, and check nearer the time whether any event that you are interested in attending is still listed and going ahead.

Please also note the special event we are planning for 26th September at Maenllwyd – details on the next page. We really want to be able to go ahead with this, and perhaps by late September it will be possible, but we can't know yet how that will work out.

The non-residential event, Connected Practice, is unaffected by Coronavirus and will go ahead as usual – details are below.

MAENLLWYD CLOSING EVENT, SEPTEMBER 26TH 2020 AT MAENLLWYD

WCF trustees have, after much deliberation, made the decision to cease use of Maenllwyd from 30th September 2020. Instead we will adopt Shawbottom Farm (see shawbottom.uk) as our main retreat centre.

Simon Child bought Shawbottom in 2018 and notified all WCF members about this at the time. He subsequently obtained the relevant planning permission and work is well underway converting it into a retreat and holiday centre.



The WCF trustees have undertaken all due diligence and made this decision on its merits, considering the advantages of Shawbottom over Maenllwyd. The factors considered included: Maenllwyd's lack of disability access; general access difficulties for the elderly at Maenllwyd; the practical impossibility of upgrading Maenllwyd; easier travel accessibility to Shawbottom Farm via all modes of transport; the superior accommodation at Shawbottom Farm; and, with a resident teacher at Shawbottom Farm, the opportunity for WCF to hold other WCF events there and build a stronger sangha.

Conflicts of interest have been avoided by taking these decisions at trustee meetings where Simon was not present.

As part of this transition, on Saturday 26th September 2020 there will be an event at Maenllwyd to mark this ending. Nearer the time you will be sent further details of this event.

PROGRAMME OF RETREATS AND OTHER EVENTS

All the following events (except for Connected Practice) are subject to amendment and/or cancellation due to Coronavirus pandemic

2ND – 9TH MAY: CONNECTED PRACTICE

ENHANCE YOUR PRACTICE IN YOUR OWN ENVIRONMENT

CO-ORDINATED BY HILARY RICHARDS

<http://w-c-f.org/Q487-401>

Join us in a commitment for a period of connected and enhanced practice to celebrate Wesak. Wesak celebrates the Enlightenment, Birth and Death of the Buddha. It is traditionally held over the full moon in May and in 2020 falls on May 7th.

We intend to raise the tempo of our practice for this period, increasing our capacity to be aware in our daily lives. 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.

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.

11TH – 18TH JULY: ILLUMINATING THE MIND – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

<http://w-c-f.org/Q487-396>

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 AUGUST: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

<http://w-c-f.org/Q487-397>

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, supported by personal interviews. 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.

6TH – 11TH SEPTEMBER: CHAN BRUSHWORK RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADERS: JAKE LYNE AND JOS HADFIELD. VENUE: ROSELIDDEN FARM, CORNWALL

<http://w-c-f.org/Q487-378>

In this retreat we will practice meditation through investigation of a Chan Buddhist koan which will also be explored through Japanese brushwork. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions and assumptions drop away facilitating a deepening exploration into the nature of life and reality.

Chan Buddhism is the precursor of Japanese Zen but is approached somewhat differently and full instruction will be given. Brushwork is also based in the Chan/Zen tradition. As Zen Master Hakuin (1688-1768) explained, brushwork is a practice with the intention of drawing 'lines of unfettered simplicity, to reveal nothing special, with no particular beauty, only an uncommon ease that transcends our understanding of space and time'.

According to the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō true creativity is not the product of conscious effort but rather the 'phenomenon of life itself'. True creativity arises from a state beyond thought, emotions, and expectations.

19TH – 24TH SEPTEMBER: WESTERN ZEN – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

<http://w-c-f.org/Q487-398>

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-night 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 teacher 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.

DAY RETREATS AND OTHER LOCAL GROUP 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. Several events scheduled for the near future have been cancelled and the status of the following listed events will be reviewed nearer the time. Please contact your local group to be informed of other future events and of arrangements during the period of social distancing.

Birmingham Group Day Retreats: Saturdays 25th July <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-404> and 7th November <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-405>, 10.00-16.00, led by Keith Jones, at Edgbaston Friends Meeting House

Bristol Chan Group Day Retreat: Saturday 24th October led by Ned Reiter. 10.00-4.30, with lunch to share, at the Bristol Zen Dojo, 91-93 Gloucester Road BS7 8AT

London Day Retreat: Sunday 4th October with Kitty D'Costa and Edd Phillips, 10am - 4pm, Function Room, Peacon House, Colindale Gardens, London NW9 4DS. Bring vegetarian lunch to share. No charge, dana to WCF only

South Devon Day Retreats: Saturday 27th June led by Jeremy Woodward <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-402>, Saturday 21st November led by Ned Reiter <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-403>, both at Leusdon Memorial Hall, Poundsgate TQ13 7PE from 10 - 4.30 with lunch to share. To maintain social distancing the June event is likely to be converted to an online event using Zoom software.

ILLUMINATING SILENCE

The book 'Illuminating Silence', John Crook's compilation and editing of Chan Master Sheng Yen's retreat talks in Wales in 1989 and 1995, with additional material by John Crook, has long been out of print. It has now been republished by Watkins Publishing and is available for purchase from the usual places. WCF has also purchased a stock and copies are available at retreats and other events. N.B. we are not selling by post, only in person at events.

AGM OF WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP CIO

We previously announced that the WCF AGM 2020 will be held on Saturday 20th June. Coronavirus measures dictate that we reschedule to later in the year and we will announce a revised date and venue once we are able to arrange them.

MAENLLWYD MEMORIES

For the final gathering at Maenllwyd on Sept 26th Nick Salt is planning to compile a photo gallery mounted on boards, and would welcome contributions from your photo archives, together with associated relevant dates & memories. Please send digital images to nicksalt@midwales.com or hard copy prints to Nick Salt, Ty Lottyn, Llawryglyn, Caersws, Powys SY17 5RJ. Send him copies if quality is OK, or original prints from which he could make copies, and let him know your return address and what you want to be sent back.

NEW CHAN FORUM

A reminder that contributions (articles, poems, artwork) are always welcome - indeed needed! So do get writing! If you have an idea you want to discuss, or would like any advice on e.g. word count do contact Pat Simmons on editor@westernchanfellowship.org

AND the next issue will come out at around the time we leave Maenllwyd. Maenllwyd has been an important and much-loved place for many of us, and we're hoping to have a couple of pages devoted to people's memories of it. If you have a particularly vivid memory, please send a paragraph (no more!) about it, to Pat Simmons. Particularly welcome will be memories of the 'early days'.

All contributions in .doc or .docx if possible, please.

LEGACIES

We'd like to alert you to a link on our website relating to leaving a legacy to charity, and memorial gifts, to commemorate the death of a loved one.

<http://w-c-f.org/Q32#legacy>

Some of you may have already made a will, others may be thinking about it and who they would like to leave their assets to. Please do have a look at our page about legacies and consider the opportunity of leaving a legacy to Western Chan Fellowship. A legacy can make an enormous difference to a relatively small charity like ours and the potential that it offers. Please take a few minutes to read through and have a think if it is something that you can do too.

Western Chan Fellowship CIO, registered charity in England & Wales number 1166162.

Office 7511, PO Box 6945, London, W1A 6US

westernchanfellowship.org