



westernchanfellowship.org

October 2022

## NEWSLETTER 44

### WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP NEWS AND EVENTS

We are continuing to run our regular residential retreat programme, mostly at Shawbottom near Leek in the Peak District. We are continuing to take precautions against Covid-19 transmission on retreat but these are proving not to be disruptive to retreats. Details are given on the website retreats page.

Forthcoming events are listed inside this newsletter, with updates listed at [www.w-c-f.org/Q342](http://www.w-c-f.org/Q342)

### A CHAN COOK'S DAY

5am start, get tea ready for people coming in after morning exercises. Join in with the morning sit – “In my heart I turn to the Three Jewels of Refuge...” Lovely to be with these people in this beautiful hall. Go through to the kitchen after 25 minutes or so, to get breakfast ready and sort out vegetables for people to chop for lunch. Sit and eat together.

Work period – people are with me in the kitchen now, washing up, chopping veg, laying the table for lunch. Great to be able to use a blender to make hummus – we've got electricity here! My helpers go off for a rest period – usually I make a cake now for this afternoon.



Join everyone in the Chan hall for the teacher's talk, and after that make the soup for lunch. Eat together, another work period, another rest period, maybe more meditation, maybe just stand outside the kitchen and look at the moorland behind Shawbottom and the light on the hill, maybe a walk, make tea and put the cake out. Go to the hall for the mantra (I always remember what Fiona called it – our offering to the Universe). Come back in the silence and make supper. Eat together. Clear up. Meditate together. Go to bed.

Wonderful as this job is, and even though you get paid for it as well, we are slightly short of cooks at the moment, so if anyone is interested in doing this please contact Clare Dobie 07791 334074.

## 12<sup>TH</sup> – 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-426](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-426)

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.

## 3<sup>RD</sup> – 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-428](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-428)

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.

*Previous experience of a residential retreat is recommended but serious beginners are also accepted.*

## 14<sup>TH</sup> – 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY: ILLUMINATING THE MIND

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-429](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-429)



HARES AT SHAWBOTTOM

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.

*Previous experience of a residential retreat is recommended but serious beginners are also accepted.*



KESTREL ATTACKING STOCK DOVE, AT SHAWBOTTOM

## DAILY/WEEKLY ONLINE EVENTS

On most days of the week there are online events available for you to attend. Please see the list at <http://w-c-f.org/Q728> Even when these events are arranged by a WCF local group leader they are open to attendance from anyone including those outside their area.

We also have a Western Chan Fellowship Practice Support Group on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/257812581073712>

And we have a long-established mailing list called WCftalk, where you can discuss Chan topics with others.

Apply for membership at: <https://groups.io/g/wcftalk/>

## LOCAL GROUP EVENTS

Details can be found at <http://w-c-f.org/Q3>

### KENT CHAN GROUP

The Kent group is offering regular day retreats. Every three months the group meets at the St Benedict's Centre in West Malling, which is easily accessible by train from London. On the months between these in-person retreats, the group also hosts a half-day online retreat.

The group is also on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/kentandmedwaychan>

### PORTSMOUTH CHAN GROUP

Portsmouth Group is holding a Day Retreat on 29th October. Timings and location from George Marsh: [portsmouthchan@westernchanfellowship.org](mailto:portsmouthchan@westernchanfellowship.org)

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