



westernchanfellowship.org

May 2023

NEWSLETTER 46

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 some 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

Do visit the website from to time as we will continue to add further events to the listing.

27TH MAY – 1ST JUNE: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-433](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-433)

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.

10TH – 17TH JUNE: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-434](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-434)

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.

SHAWBOTTOM BARN OWLS



After an interval of two years without any nesting barn owls, this year we do have a pair nesting in our barn owl box. At the date of printing this newsletter they have laid four eggs – it is possible there might yet be more to come. The first hatching will be due around 6th May, and then subsequent eggs at intervals over the following couple of weeks. Watch them on our Owlcam!

<https://shawbottomfarm.co.uk/owlcam>

The large nest box is high on the house wall near the back of the Chan hall. Barn owls can make quite loud hissing or screeching sounds, but fortunately the double-glazing on the Chan hall windows reduces the sounds so that they are not distracting in the hall.

We also have some barn owl video here (and weasels too)

<https://youtu.be/9EY-z9ddrAE>

2ND JULY - MINDFULNESS – CONTINUING THE JOURNEY – 1-DAY ONLINE EVENT

LEADERS: STUART MCLEOD AND SIAN THOMAS [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-441](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-441)

- Have you completed an eight-week MBSR/MBCT course or similar?
- Are you wondering about where to go next with your personal practice?

This one-day online day retreat has been designed for graduates of eight-week MBSR/MBCT courses, supporting you to deepen your exploration of mindfulness in its original context of Buddhist meditation.

The programme for the day will include both guided and silent meditation, and you will be introduced to the practice of Silent Illumination – a Chinese Zen meditation method. Drawing upon some of the key skills and concepts you will have learnt through your mindfulness training, we will investigate together how these relate more clearly to Buddhist thought and meditation, helping you to open up new possibilities to grow and develop your personal practice.

5TH – 12TH AUGUST: ILLUMINATING THE MIND – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-442](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-442)

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.

9TH – 13TH SEPTEMBER: A TASTE OF CHAN – 4-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-443](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-443)

An opportunity to experience the traditional style of a formal, silent Chan retreat. 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.

21ST – 26TH OCTOBER: FINDING FREEDOM – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADERS: ALYSUN JONES AND JULIET HACKNEY. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-444](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-444)

This retreat will help participants to enter into the reality of daily experience, exploring and reducing the separation that is commonly felt between mind and body, and between individual and environment. Practice will help to bring habitual reactions into awareness and allow participants to gently release them resulting in greater appreciation of life in the here and now. There will be meditation, working with the body and emotional awareness, connecting with the environment and nature.

11TH – 18TH NOVEMBER: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADERS: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-445](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-445)

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.

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

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-446](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-446)

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WCF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SATURDAY 24TH JUNE 2023, COMBINED WITH SHAWBOTTOM OPEN-DAY / OPEN-WEEKEND

This year we intend to try a hybrid AGM, offering a Zoom connection to an AGM being held in person at Shawbottom Farm. In association with this there will be an opportunity to visit Shawbottom and, if you wish, stay overnight on nights of 23rd and/or 24th June.

We don't know how many will want to attend in person, nor how many will want to stay overnight. So that we can manage the accommodation and the car parking it will be required to book in advance so that we can avoid overflowing. Car-sharing where possible is advised both for environmental and financial reasons, and for reducing the pressure on parking spaces.

Details of booking arrangements will be circulated to members soon.

ART FOR SHAWBOTTOM FARM

ROS CUTHBERT

Greetings fellow Buddhists, I am a professional artist and have been a practitioner with the Western Chan Fellowship since the late 1980s. I have a project I need to share, in the hope that some of you might be able to help me.

I have offered our Teacher Simon Child a suite of four blind-printed etchings (printed without ink, embossed) to hang in Shawbottom Farm Retreat Centre. The images are inspired by sacred geometry, and each is teamed up with a classical Haiku poem. They are printed on beautiful handmade etching paper.

I made them a long time ago, in the 1970s when a student at the Royal College of Art. I have only one complete set left and would love them to be at Shawbottom Farm, where I believe and hope they might be an inspiration to practitioners. Simon has seen them and expressed a keenness to have them there.

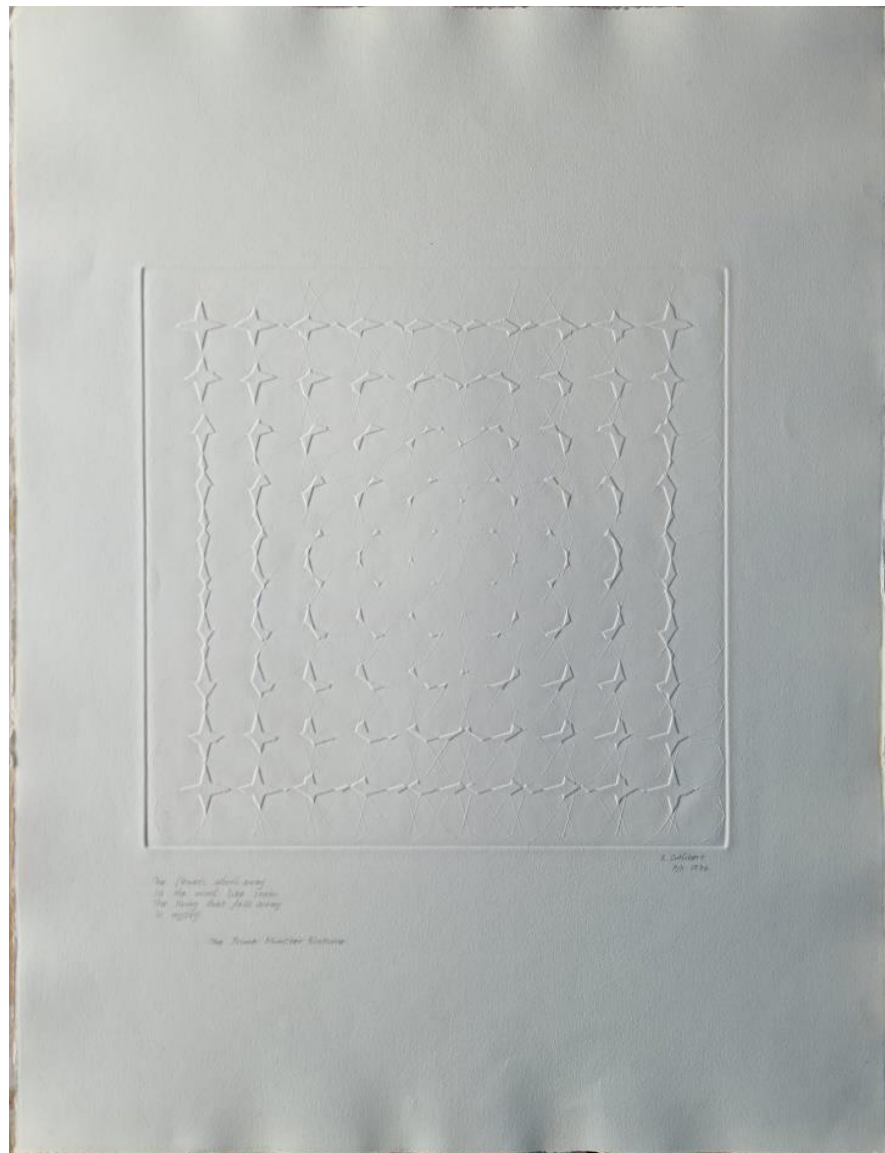
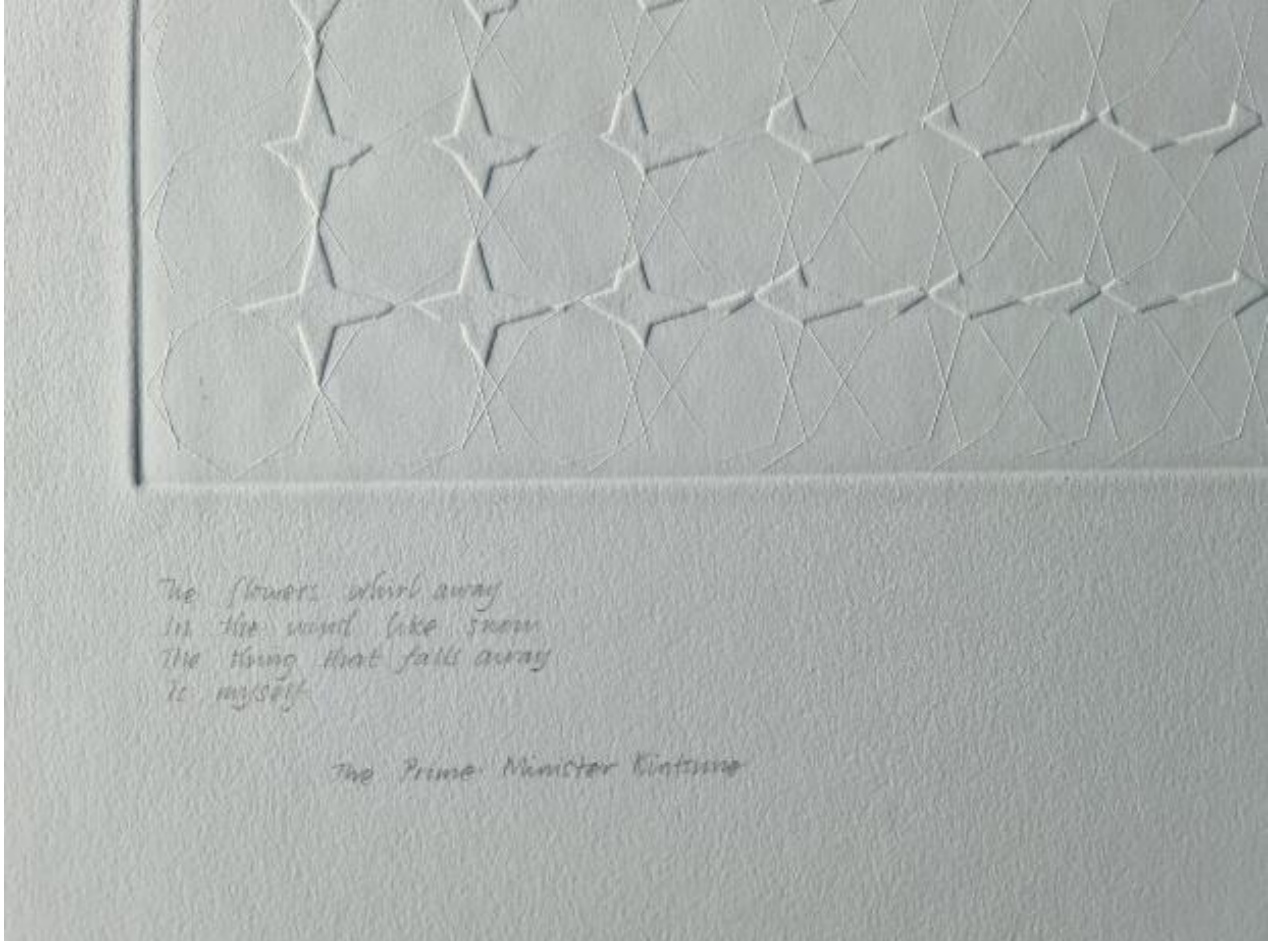


Image: 'The Flowers Whirl Away' Blind printed etching by Ros Cuthbert 1976 23 x 30 ins Haiku by The Prime Minister Kintsune

The trouble is, they are not framed. I am pleased to donate the etchings, but to frame them will cost around £100 each. To try to raise the money I am reaching out to my Sangha. If on reading this you feel inspired to send me a donation, I will be hugely grateful. If I can raise £400 I will be able to get all the prints framed, but if only £300 then I will frame three, or £200 then two. My artist husband David Cuthbert is an experienced picture framer and will do the work as economically as he can.



CORNER DETAIL

If you would like to be a part of my project to give Shawbottom Farm a gift for future practitioners, please make a donation to my bank account, details below. I will take good care of your money and keep a record which can be circulated to the donors when the project is completed (you may remain anonymous if preferred); and should I make more than the cost of the frames, I will donate the surplus to the Western Chan Fellowship fund for supported places on retreat.

This letter marks the beginning of my crowdfund. I will run it for a month with weekly updates on WCFTalk mailing list, and include a photograph of one of the etchings each week. They are difficult to photograph being white on white, so I will include a detail of a corner including the Haiku. I will also give an update on funds raised and announce closure if the target is reached early.

Here are my bank details. Please use ETCH4 as your ref., and drop me an email to let me know, at: roscuthbert@hotmail.com

Name: Mrs R Cuthbert Sort code: 07 02 46 Account: 11823907

Even a small donation will help me to get to my target, and see the etchings installed at Shawbottom Farm. Thank you for any help you can give.

EUROPEAN BUDDHIST UNION

JAKE LYNE

AGM

The 2022 EBU AGM was at the Fo Guang Shan centre in Paris, which is entirely run by Chan Buddhist nuns. Jake Lyne and Jannie Mead represented the WCF.

Most of the meeting was spent in workshops devoted to EBU projects. A project of particular interest is Buddhist education in schools. There are videos for different age-groups and material is being added all the time. See windowsintobuddhism.com

There is also a project on Buddhist Chaplaincy and a Contemplative Sciences Network. All the project areas can be found on the new EBU website europeanbuddhistunion.org under the 'Who We Are' tab.

ECODHARMA PROJECT GROUP

The EBU has a podcast channel, to which Jake Lyne has contributed, and a regular magazine, the most recent issue of which was devoted to Ecodharma. It is of high quality and well worth reading. Here is the link for a free download:

<https://europeanbuddhistunion.org/ebu-spring-2023-magazine>

EBU ETHICS GROUP

The function of the ethics group will be to address any serious ethical breaches that involve member organisations of the EBU. There will be a dedicated and protected email address for this group. For the moment, anyone who wants to report an issue can use the EBU contact page and ask for a confidential link to the Ethics Group.

2023 EBU AGM IN BRUSSELS

Apart from a business meeting, there will be four main sessions and project teams have been invited to submit proposals. The Ecodharma Network will be contributing one of these sessions which will be open to a wider public; more details to follow in the next newsletter.

DAILY/WEEKLY ONLINE AND LOCAL 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/>

Details of local group meeting schedules and events can be found at <http://w-c-f.org/Q3>

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