



RETREAT PROGRAMME:

A new retreat programme is being distributed with this newsletter. Remember that any amendments to the programme will be available between issues of the newsletter by referring to the website

July 1st-8th 2000 Millennial Ch'an With Master Sheng-yen. This retreat is to be held at, and organised by, Gaia House. Contact Gaia House West Ogwell, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6EN, Tel: 01626 333613, gaiahouse@gn.apc.org. The latest news is that it is fully booked and has a long waiting list for places.

Do you know of any organisations or individuals who would support the WCF? We wish to raise funds to replenish the bursary fund, and also to consider larger projects for the future. Perhaps you know of a body in your area that donates funds to other charities and may consider assisting the WCF. If so please give the details to a committee member, or pass the WCF details to that body.

If you wish make any **announcements in this newsletter** then send your information to the secretary Simon Child. We intend to send it out with each issue of NCF, both to NCF subscribers and also to all others on our mailing list.

New Local Groups. Two new local groups have started up, one in Guildford and one in Gillingham. Both of these are led by Maenllwyd regulars, but as is the case with several of the WCF groups their membership is more eclectic with origins from elsewhere and other practices. If these are local to you then feel free to contact them.

The **Bury (North Manchester)** group holds day retreats on Sundays every six weeks or so, the next being Sunday 7th May, then 11th June, as well as regular Friday evening meetings. Contact Simon Child.

Western Ch'an Fellowship
Complaints Procedure.

As we formalise our organisation we have designed a complaints procedure, for if there is ever any cause to make a complaint or comment on the activities of the group leaders, the committee, or of retreat leaders. You can obtain a copy from your local group leader or from any committee member.

Report from Croatia.

I went to Croatia still a bit shaky from flu. I got a wonderfully warm welcome and much kindness. We did a short retreat which was much appreciated. The Center in Zagreb is in a large airy flat with views of sky and the cathedral spires. Deep bells sound in the early morning. Since I had not been there before I could tell them all my old stories!! Their Sitting was extremely good perhaps due to the martial arts/yoga origins of this group and I felt there was a sound intuitive grasp of Dharma. This group is well integrated around the warm and perceptive leadership of Zharko Andricevic and his brother Matso. Two women members will be coming to Gaia House for the retreat with Shih-fu.

John Crook - Jan 2000

Become a Fellow of the WCF **Why You Should Consider Applying**

There are no personal advantages to becoming a Fellow, and yet you are strongly urged to consider applying, if you are eligible.*

If you become a Fellow you will have a voice in the development of the WCF. You will be eligible to vote at general meetings and to be elected to the executive committee.

You will be expressing your support of the WCF, and you will be giving a small but important practical support in the form of your annual subscription. This is used to pay for the administration of the WCF and for mailings such as this newsletter and the retreat programme.

To apply, contact Tim Blanc and he will send you an application form and a copy of the WCF constitution. The subscription for Fellowship is only £25 p.a. or £10 if unwaged. This includes a free subscription to New Ch'an Forum.

*There are restrictions on who may apply. This is controlled by the constitution of the WCF, and it was so designed to ensure that only those who have experience of our practice are eligible to become Fellows and hence of the committee. In brief, you must have sat at least three retreats with us, one of which must be a Western Zen Retreat and one a Ch'an Retreat. You must take the Three Refuges, attempt to keep the Precepts, and undertake to carry out a personal practice of Buddhism. Contact Tim or Simon for details.

Money Money Money

During the last twelve months the WCF has paid out bursaries of £1165 to assist low waged and unwaged persons to attend retreats. This is a very important part of our programme as a charity, but of course we can only continue this as long as the bursary fund continues to have remaining funds. We were only able to halfway top up the fund from a surplus on the finances of running retreats during the year, and so the bursary fund starts off this year a lot smaller. We would always welcome donations to the bursary funds, or for any other uses, and we would welcome pointers to any grant awarding bodies that it may be helpful for us to approach.

Introducing the Dharma of Ch'an **Tapes of Retreat Talks**

On the most recent retreat "Introducing the Dharma of Ch'an" John gave a series of talks surveying the Dharma that underlies Ch'an, including the basic formulas of the Buddha, (i.e. the Four Noble Truths, Impermanence, Anatta, Law of Co-dependent Arising etc) leading into a consideration of the meaning of Emptiness in Prajnaparamita and Madhyamaka. He also spoke on the Mind Only school discussing Cittamatra and Tathagatagarbha and reviewed recent historical studies of Ch'an focussing on the Platform Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra, and others. He ended by focussing on the current status of Ch'an in Europe. These talks contain some academic material and provide a 'map' of the Dharma of Ch'an. The style is however more that of a 'teisho' than that of a university lecture. These could be a good set of reference tapes. They have not yet been duplicated, and so you have a chance to place an order now rather than relying on surplus copies possibly being available later. Contact Mike or Sally Masheder on 0117 924 8819, soon.

NHS Buddhist Chaplaincy training

The National Health Service has put aside some money for the training of Hospital Chaplains from the smaller faiths. The Network of Buddhist Organisations has some involvement in this, and our representative Sally Masheder has information about it. Please contact Sally (by phone on 0117 9248819, or by post to 6,Tyne Rd, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8EE) if you would like to know more about it, or have any views on it, or indeed if you would like to consider undergoing this training yourself.

The first stage is starting very soon and is the training of a few people, who already have experience of chaplaincy work, in an overview of the NHS in relation to this work, and to work as a selection panel. This is on 1st April - contact Paul Seto straightaway on 0181 682 3442 if you want to become involved at this early stage. Later on this 'pan-Buddhist' panel will select others individuals for a full Chaplains Course. The main training will depend on the success of a grant application.

Themed weekends and Study Retreats?

During a WCF committee meeting we discussed an idea of mine. What I would like to know is whether this appeals to enough people to make it worth taking forward. John wouldn't personally want to add this to his teaching load; instead he would expect one or more of us to run the events. Anyone interested in attending this kind of 'retreat', or with ideas about how they might be structured, etc, please let me know.

What I really had in mind was the possibility of having perhaps a couple of '**themed weekends**' a year at the Maenllwyd, during which participants would be able to focus on a particular issue, hear about it from the weekend 'leader', and discuss and reflect upon it. In fact the whole aim of such an event would be to stimulate reflection, and inform our practice and daily lives.

I'm delighted that John has decided to run a Ch'an Dharma retreat in Feb/March 2000. This sounds to be a more extended version of my suggestion, combining meditation, talks and discussion, and time for quiet reflection. The weekend idea I have in mind would focus on one fairly 'tight' theme, and give an opportunity to 'get into' that in some depth.

I'm sure we can all think of themes that would lend themselves to this approach, e.g. compassion, right understanding, contemplation, the four lines of proper exertion*, introduction to sutra study, etc, etc.

Who should 'lead'? We might consider inviting members of our Advisory Board. I think we could quite possibly investigate some themes without an 'expert'. I do think that there needs to be a 'leader' who is skilled at facilitating groups and learning in groups.

* This 'theme' was the subject of a weekend meeting in New York last year. The 4 lines are:

1. knowing how to destroy unwholesome states that have already arisen;
2. knowing how to prevent unwholesome states that have not yet arisen from arising;
3. knowing how to develop wholesome states that have not yet arisen;
4. knowing how to maintain and increase already arisen wholesome states.

Tim Paine, 13 Limerick Road, Redland, Bristol, BS6 7DY. Tel 0117 9245332 timothy.paine@which.net

Western Ch'an Fellowship Contacts

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Western Ch'an Fellowship Webpages <http://www.child.demon.co.uk/wcf/>
(include past issues of New Ch'an Forum, retreat programme updates, etc)

WCF-L Ch'an Email List Send message "*subscribe WCF-L*" (without the quotes) to:
majordomo@child.demon.co.uk If you have difficulties with majordomo, email wcf@child.demon.co.uk

For information about **retreats in New York with Master Sheng-yen** contact: **Ch'an Meditation Center**,
Institute of Chung Hwa Buddhist Culture, 90-56 Corona Ave., Elmhurst, New York 11373, USA,
Tel: 00 1 718 592 6593, Fax: 00 1 718 592 0717 ddmbany@aol.com <http://www.chan1.org/>

Retreat Cooks - more needed

For many years Tim Blanc has been the main retreat cook. More recently Pamela Hopkinson has been taking this role in several retreats, and this year we have another joining the ranks - Pete Lowry has trained at Maenllwyd and will be cooking for some future retreats. But there is always scope for others to train and be available for cooking on retreats, particularly if, as is under consideration, we expand the retreat programme. If anyone would like to train in retreat cooking then please contact Tim Blanc. You must already be an accomplished cook - the training is not in how to cook in general but in how to cook for a retreat and under retreat conditions. Because of the heavy workload involved and the lack of opportunity to fully participate in the teaching and meditation of a retreat this is a paid role, but you would be undertaking this not just for the fee but also to support the work of the Fellowship.

The Western Ch'an Fellowship has taken over responsibility for John Crook's Maenllwyd Retreat and the New Ch'an Forum (previously held by the Bristol Ch'an Group) mailing lists. Your details are kept on a computer database, which will be used for keeping you informed of Western Ch'an Fellowship activities. Please notify me 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. Thank You. Tim Blanc (Membership Secretary).

Local Groups Contacts

Aberystwyth Ken Jones 01970 880603,
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E Midlands, Hilary Richards 0115 9242075,
Gillingham Stuart McLeod 01634 581159,
Guildford Roger Taylor 01483 202422,
Mid-Wales, John Senior 01885 488323,
York James McCarthy 01904 330977.

Brighton John Mitchell 01273 846261,
Bury N Manchester Simon Child 0161 7611945,
Cheadle S Manchester Ron Henshall 0161 4910612,
Edinburgh Frank Tait 01721 721146,
Glastonbury, Ned Reiter 01458 833663,
London Bruce Stevenson 0181 9617802,
Swindon Hughie Carroll 01793 534963,

New Ch'an Forum

Formerly published by the Bristol Ch'an Group, and now published by the WCF, the New Ch'an Forum includes retreat reports written by participants of retreats at Maenllwyd, Dharma talks by John Crook and Master Sheng-yen, social commentary, articles on lay practice, poetry photos and artwork, etc. Submissions welcome.

Subscriptions to New Ch'an Forum: WCF Fellows receive NCF as a benefit of Fellowship. Others may subscribe at a price of £7.50 per three issues (we aim for three issues per year) by writing with payment enclosed (cheques payable to Western Ch'an Fellowship) to Tim Blanc as below.

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New Ch'an Forum subscription: please send a cheque for £7.50, payable to: **Western Ch'an Fellowship**, to: Tim Blanc, 26 Hinton Road, Greenbank, Bristol, BS5 6HB

This will pay for three issues, which are published approximately three times per year (variable). Back issues can be obtained for £4 per issue.

Details may be kept on a computer database, which will be used for subscription administration and for keeping you informed of Western Ch'an Fellowship activities. Please indicate if you do not wish your details to be kept on a computer database.

Name

Tel

Address

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e-mail