



## Western Ch'an Fellowship

Registered Charity No. 1068637

Newsletter No. 2 November 1998

We intend to publish this newsletter regularly, and to send it to all on our list of those interested in the activities of the Western Ch'an Fellowship, and in the retreats at Maenllwyd. New Ch'an Forum will continue its role as our journal with its usual mixture of Dharma talks, retreat reports, social comment, poetry, etc, and if you wish to subscribe then please use the form overleaf. This newsletter will bring you notices of events, both of retreats at Maenllwyd and those arranged by local meditation groups, and other news regarding the WCF. If you wish make any announcements in this newsletter then send your information to the secretary Simon Child.

Firstly we bring you advance notice that **Master Sheng-Yen** has agreed to lead a retreat in the millennial year. It is planned to take place in the first half of July 2000, and will probably be held at Gaia House in Devon so that the larger accommodation can allow larger numbers to attend, perhaps about sixty. More details once the arrangements have been finalised.

**Local group news** will be a feature of this newsletter.

The **Bristol** Ch'an Group will be holding a day retreat on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December, led by John Crook and entitled: "Zen Attitude, Zen Opportunity". In the evening there will be a talk with slides about places John has visited in China. For details of the arrangements contact Caroline Paine.

They continue their regular weekly meditation meetings, (see over) and they are starting a discussion of the precepts, taking one each week.

The **Dharma Study Group** in Bristol is embarking on a study of the Heart Sutra, based on the commentary in fourteen parts by Master Sheng Yen published in the Ch'an Magazine from New York. Contact Tim Paine.

The **York** group is holding it's first day retreat on 7<sup>th</sup> November. Contact Jake Lynes de Ver or James McCarthy.

The **Bury** group holds day retreats approximately once every six to eight weeks, the next being on 15<sup>th</sup> November. Contact Simon Child.

Ned Reiter has started a new meditation group, meeting on the last Tuesday in each month in **Glastonbury**.

The next meeting of the **executive committee of the WCF** will be on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January 1999. If there are any matters that you wish to be raised at the meeting then please contact a committee member.

The **Western Ch'an Fellowship AGM** will be held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1999 at Maenllwyd. There will be **three committee posts open to elections**. Only Fellows of the WCF may be nominated to stand for these posts. The posts are: Treasurer (for three years); "First elected committee member" (for three years); and "Second elected committee member" (to run for one year only, as this is the remainder of the term of Hilary Richards before she was elected to the chair of the WCF last year). Any fellow of the WCF may stand for any or all of these positions, but must be nominated by two other fellows and must be willing to accept the responsibilities of becoming a trustee of a charity if elected. **Contact the secretary if you require a nomination form**. Nominations must be received by the secretary at least seven days prior to the AGM.

Maenllwyd has been given a Chinese name: **Stone Mountain Ch'an Temple**. The literal translation from Welsh of "Maenllwyd" is "Grey Stones". This name has been given by Ven Sic Chung Chuen of Dharma Rain Temple in Birmingham, and is a name in the traditional style of naming of Chinese temples, giving the name of the mountain, followed by the style of practice at that place, which of course in our case is Ch'an.

**Monasteries Of South China** - Nan Hua Si and Yun Men Si, the monasteries of the famous Ch'an Masters Hui Neng and Yun Men. Winter 1999. A remarkable opportunity has arisen not only to visit these most famous of Chinese Ch'an monasteries, now refreshingly refurbished and functional, but also to do a Ch'an retreat in a traditional Ch'an Hall. This invitation arises from John Crook's visit with Yiu Yannang to China in July 1997. Anyone interested should contact John soon so that some idea as to who and how many persons may like to come. Chinese speakers especially welcomed. This event is at the planning stage and we need an estimate of numbers as soon as possible. It is hoped to restrict the cost to £2000. Duration around 18-20 days.

**Chanting.** The standard of the chanting at Maenllwyd is rather variable and often takes quite a few days of each retreat to get going well. To facilitate improvement in the chanting we are planning to produce a matching tape and booklet so that you can hear, study, and even practice the chanting at home. The tape will be produced by

Chinese monks in Birmingham, with a style close to that used by Master Sheng Yen. To help us estimate the numbers required, please let the secretary know if you are likely to be interested in purchasing either a tape or booklet or both (estimated costs of tape about £4, and book £2, including p&p, but do not send any money yet).

<b><u>Local groups</u></b>	<b>Brighton</b> John McGowan 01273 401643	<b>Bristol Ch'an Group</b> Wednesdays Caroline Paine 0117 924 5332
<b>Bristol Dharma Study Group</b> Monthly Tim Paine 0117 924 5332	<b>Bury, Greater Manchester</b> Fridays Simon Child 0161 761 1945	<b>Cardiff</b> Last Tuesday of month Eddy Street 01222 691146
<b>Edinburgh</b> Frank Tait 01721 721146	<b>Glastonbury</b> Last Tuesday of month Ned Reiter 01458 833663	<b>London</b> Bruce Stevenson 0181 961 7802
<b>Stroud</b> Alec Lawless 01285 659171	<b>Swindon</b> Mondays John Senior 01793 613940 Hughie Carroll 01793 534963	<b>York</b> Mondays Jake Lynes de Ver 01904 728419 James McCarthy 01904 330977

<b><u>Western Ch'an Fellowship</u></b>	<b>Teacher</b> Dr John Crook Winterhead Hill Farm, Winscombe, N. Somerset, BS25 1RS Johcro@compuserve.com	<b>Chair</b> Hilary Richards 8 Park Terrace The Park Nottingham, NG1 5DN
<b>Secretary,</b> Simon Child 24 Woodgate Ave, Bury, Lancs, BL9 7RU Tel 0161 761 1945 Fax 0161 763 3221. wcf@child.demon.co.uk	<b>Treasurer and Membership Secretary</b> Tim Blanc 26 Hinton Rd Greenbank, Bristol, BS5 6HB. Tblanc@globalnet.co.uk	<b>New Ch'an Forum Editor</b> Pamela Hopkinson, 7 Ember Lane, Bonsall, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 2AF, Phone/Fax 01629 823590 pamela@phopkins.demon.co.uk

### **Electronic Resources**

<b>Western Ch'an Fellowship Webpages</b> <a href="http://child.demon.co.uk/wcf/">http://child.demon.co.uk/wcf/</a> (includes past issues of New Ch'an Forum)
<b>WCF-L Ch'an Email List</b> Contact John McGowan at: <a href="mailto:john@conyboro.demon.co.uk">john@conyboro.demon.co.uk</a>
<b>Ch'an Centre Website</b> <a href="http://www.chan1.org/">http://www.chan1.org/</a>

## Western Ch'an Fellowship

The WCF is formed of regular past participants of retreats with John Crook at Maenllwyd. We have formed this organisation, which is registered as a charity, to support the work of John in various ways. John is relieved of some of the administrative workload of organising the increasingly busy retreat programme, and this has enabled him to consider future developments such as publications and teachings, and training local group leaders and future retreat leaders. We intend to develop the charitable nature of the Fellowship and already have a bursary scheme, established by two generous donations from past retreat participants, which is assisting the attendance of unwaged and low-waged participants at retreat. The network of local groups throughout the country is developing and becoming more co-ordinated through John's training programme for leaders (see NCF 18). We regard local groups as playing an important part in the Fellowship, since in the past some have found the lack of continuity of contact with practitioners outside of retreats to be problematic. The general pattern of retreats remains open to all as before, with Western Zen and Ch'an retreats as the main feature, and with some Tibetan teachings and exploration of the links between psychology and Buddhist practice making up the balance of the programme.

If you wish to apply to become a member of the Western Ch'an Fellowship then please send a large stamped addressed envelope to the Membership Secretary, Tim Blanc, who will send you a copy of the constitution and an application form. The constitution places some restrictions on eligibility to apply for fellowship, so not all can be accepted. In brief, you must have attended three retreats at Maenllwyd including one Ch'an Retreat and one Western Zen Retreat (or equivalent elsewhere subject to the approval of the committee), take the three Refuges and follow the basic precepts, follow a regular Buddhist practice, and undertake to continue to attend at least one retreat every three years and to support the Objects of the Charity. These requirements are not meant to be exclusive but are to protect the lineage orientation of the WCF.

As a charity we have some tax benefits for fundraising, and we need to raise money if only to replenish the bursary fund! We could also use funds to improve the facilities on retreat, to improve the library at Maenllwyd, to support local groups with appropriate materials, and so on. We are investigating registering with the Inland Revenue to allow us to accept donations and membership by covenant, and you can already make use of the Charity Cards scheme for tax efficient donations by taxpayers. You can register for the scheme by phoning 0800 993311. If you wish any donation to be earmarked for a particular usage then please say so. Please contact the treasurer if you wish to discuss any donations, covenants, or other such matters.

## Retreats at Maenllwyd

<b>Western Zen Retreats</b>	January 7 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> 1999	Cost £150
	March 11 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup> 1999	
<b>Ch'an Retreats</b>	May 22 <sup>nd</sup> - 29 <sup>th</sup> 1999	Cost £190
	June 20 <sup>th</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup> 1999	
<b>Leaders Training Retreat</b>	Feb 11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> 1999	for group leaders, current and future
<b>Annual General Meeting of WCF</b>	Feb 13 <sup>th</sup> 1999	for WCF Fellows
<b>Mahamudra-Tibetan Zen</b>	Feb 13 <sup>th</sup> - 18 <sup>th</sup> 1999	Cost £150
<b>Chanting Retreat.</b>	Jan 16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> 1999	<b>CANCELLED</b>
<b>Ch'an Retreat in Berlin with Shi Fu.</b>	Apr 22 <sup>nd</sup> - May 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1999	Contact John Crook.
<b>Retreat with John Crook</b>	<b>in Berlin</b>	Nov 21 <sup>st</sup> - 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1998,
	<b>in Warsaw</b>	Nov 23 <sup>rd</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup> 1998 and in July 1999

Please apply to book retreats (non-returnable deposit £50) in writing to Tim Blanc. If you have not attended a retreat at Maenllwyd before then ask Tim to send you a copy of the full programme, which has further important information.

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 email [ddmbany@aol.com](mailto:ddmbany@aol.com) <http://www.chan1.org>

## **PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST**

### **The Ch'an Magazine from the Ch'an Center in New York**

The Ch'an Center in New York publishes a quarterly magazine, which is available free and which they would like to distribute more widely. It has recently undergone a redesign so the content and style may change a little, but typically it includes transcribed Dharma talks by Master Sheng-yen, retreat reports, poems, scholarly articles, news and events, etc.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list then write to the Ch'an Center and ask them. The address is as above. They distribute it free of charge but like to receive donations to cover the cost of printing and postage. They estimate the basic costs to them of sending an overseas subscription to be about \$9 to \$10 per year. The cheapest way to send a donation, as long as you trust the postal system, is to obtain some dollar bills from the post office or from Thomas Cook's, and enclose them with your letter. A more secure way, but incurring higher bank charges, would be to send a bankers draft.

### **Books by John Crook**

Two recent books by John Crook may be of interest to readers. **The Yogins of Ladakh** recounts some of John's travel adventures in Ladakh, his encounters with Yogins (meditators) and other characters, a chapter by James Low on his practice of Chod (meditation in graveyards), and a translation with commentary of a previously unpublished teaching manuscript on the practice of Mahamudra. This can be obtained by post direct from John for £17 including p&p.

**The Hilltops of the Hong Kong Moon** is an autobiography of John's exploits during National Service in the army in Hong Kong in the 1950's. It recounts some of his first encounters with Buddhism, the formation of a lifelong friendship, and his attitudes and reaction to the circumstances of the people of Hong Kong at that time. It can be ordered direct from the distributors: Unity Distributions, Unit 1, Southfolds Rd, Oakleigh Hay Business Park, Corby, North Hants, NN18 9EV, Tel 01536 747628, Fax 01536 741766, price £8.99.

### **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:** For a 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 £3.00 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

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Address

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e-mail