



Newsletter 22: Retreat Programme 2012

In 2012 we shall hold retreats at several venues. Maenllwyd in Wales remains our main venue, but we shall also use some other venues as listed below. Some retreats, as indicated, require prior experience, and others are open to all with newcomers welcomed. On all retreats private personal interviews are offered to guide you in your practice.

The programme is subject to changes (additions, amendments, and cancellations). For example it is likely that we shall add some more events such as day and weekend retreats to this programme, so please refer to the website for the latest version.

Online booking by credit/debit card is available, or you may book by post and pay by cheque - please refer to the retreats page on the website for booking details and application forms (online or postal):

www.westernchanfellowship.org/retreats.html

January 7th - 14th 7-Day Silent Illumination Retreat

Leader: Hilary Richards, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

This traditional week-long retreat will allow the time and space for serious practitioners to learn, practice and cultivate the Chinese Zen method of Silent Illumination. Simple yet difficult, within this space you may encounter an opening that allows you to come to rest and find freedom, peace and lucidity. This is not a place to opt out but enables effective engagement with daily life.

Facilitated in a kindly and supportive manner we will present the teaching and methods of Master Sheng-yen, through practice, talks and individual interviews. The format will be that of a full Chan retreat, rising early, with a rigorous schedule of meditation, work periods, and exercise.

Requires prior attendance at a 5 day retreat.

February 19th - 24th 5-Day Western Zen Retreat

Leader: Eddy Street, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

A simple monastic regime enables the mind to face the major paradox - Who am I? - in creative mutual questioning. People work in turns with each member of the group in exploring this fundamental Koan. The intensive focus drives each into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. The outcome may be a profound sense of the unity of self and possibly a direct insight into the 'ground of being', in traditional Zen considered to be a glimpse of Enlightenment. Whether or not such an insight happens, participants share a rich experience in new self-knowledge and understanding others.

Suitable both for beginners and for experienced practitioners.

March 10th - 15th 5-Day Chan retreat

Leader: Jake Lyne, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

In Chan we uncover the nature of mind, or 'heart-mind', through meditation focussed on calming, opening and investigating. This enables the cultivation of wisdom and compassion. Whether you are already on the path or just beginning, a period of dedicated practice can give you a taste or a deepening of Chan insight. On this retreat we all start from the same place, a beginner's mind attitude of 'not knowing'. We rise early with a concentrated programme of sitting meditation and exercise sessions.

Suitable both for beginners and for experienced practitioners.

April 14th - 21st 7-Day Mahamudra on the Tantric Path

Leader: Sophie Muir, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

An opportunity for practitioners to deepen their insight through an introduction to a profound Tibetan meditation system that originated in India during the richest period of Mahayana evolution. Preliminary exercises create the motivation for receiving an empowerment to practice methods evoking compassion and wisdom with humility and self-understanding. The retreat provides the first steps in 'becoming a Buddha in one lifetime' through the mental yogas of the Mahamudra meditation system.

Previous experience of either a Western Zen Retreat or other Chan retreat is required.

May 10th - 17th 7-Day Chan Retreat

Leader: Jake Lyne, Venue: Bala Brook, Dartmoor

This traditional week-long sesshin will allow the time and space for serious practitioners to learn, practice and cultivate Chinese Zen Meditation. Simple yet difficult, within this space you may encounter an opening that allows you to come to rest and find freedom, peace and lucidity. This is not a place to opt out but enables effective engagement with daily life.

Facilitated in a kindly and supportive manner we will present the teaching and methods of Master Sheng-yen, through practice, talks and individual interviews. The format will be that of a full Chan retreat, rising early, with a rigorous schedule of meditation, work periods, walks and exercise.

Requires prior attendance at a 5 day retreat.

May 26th - 31st 5-Day Western Zen Retreat

Leader: Fiona Nuttall, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

A simple monastic regime enables the mind to face the major paradox - Who am I? - in creative mutual questioning. People work in turns with each member of the group in exploring this fundamental Koan. The intensive focus drives each into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. The outcome may be a profound sense of the unity of self and possibly a direct insight into the 'ground of being', in traditional Zen considered to be a glimpse of Enlightenment. Whether or not such an insight happens, participants share a rich experience in new self-knowledge and understanding others.

Suitable both for beginners and for experienced practitioners.

June 20th - 30th 10-Day Silent Illumination Retreat

Leader: Simon Child, Venue: Maenllwyd

This Retreat marks a special occasion. In January 2012 Simon Child is expected to be appointed as the new Teacher of the Western Chan Fellowship. Whilst he was a student of John Crook, the Founding Teacher of the WCF, Simon inherited the Dharma from Chan Master Sheng Yen in 2000. From then on John and Simon worked as colleagues until John's death in July 2011. Now Simon carries forward the special approach to transmitting Chan Buddhism that evolved in the Western Chan Fellowship under John's leadership. This 10-day retreat will be Simon's first WCF retreat as the new Teacher.

The retreat will allow the time and space for serious practitioners to learn, practice and cultivate the Chinese Zen method of Silent Illumination, the ancestor of the Japanese Soto practice of Shikantaza. A 10-day retreat offers the potential for the practice to deepen to a greater extent than may occur on the usual 7-day sesshin, and surprising capacities of the mind become evident as the practice stabilises. Simple yet difficult, within this space you may encounter an opening that allows you to come to rest and find freedom, peace and lucidity. This is not a place to opt out but enables effective engagement with daily life.

Facilitated in a kindly and supportive manner we will present the teaching and methods of Chan Master Sheng Yen, through practice, talks and individual interviews. The format will be that of a full Chan retreat, rising early, with a rigorous schedule of meditation, work periods, and exercise.

Requires prior attendance at a 5 day retreat.

July 2nd - 9th 7-Day Retreat: The Hsin-Hsin-Ming

Leader: Ken Jones. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

The Hsin-Hsin-Ming or "Trust in the Heart" is arguably the greatest teaching poem of Chinese Zen. In this retreat we shall discover its fresh value and relevance to each of our daily lives. Talks, meditation, group work, liturgy, interviews, and outdoor meditations around this remote, electricity-free farm high in the hills of mid-Wales.

Suitable both for beginners and for experienced practitioners.

August 4th – 9th 5-Day Western Zen Retreat

Leader: Hilary Richards, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

A simple monastic regime enables the mind to face the major paradox - Who am I? - in creative mutual questioning. People work in turns with each member of the group in exploring this fundamental Koan. The intensive focus drives each into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. The outcome may be a profound sense of the unity of self and possibly a direct insight into the 'ground of being', in traditional Zen considered to be a glimpse of Enlightenment. Whether or not such an insight happens, participants share a rich experience in new self-knowledge and understanding others.

Suitable both for beginners and for experienced practitioners.

September 15th – 22nd 7-Day Koan Retreat

Leader: Simon Child, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

This retreat uses new ways of investigating koans that are appropriate for Westerners attempting to uncover their enlightenment potential.

A selection of koan stories is provided from which each participant is asked to choose one for their practice on this retreat. As this is a personal choice it tends to relate to the basic 'life koan' of each individual. The story thus becomes of profound personal significance.

Placing the koan within meditation, the natural Western tendency to analyze meanings is worn away and profound meditative inquiry arises. As the 'Great Doubt' appears, the possibility of deep insight into the Dharma becomes possible in the time-honoured manner.

Requires prior attendance at a 5 day retreat.

October 13th - 18th 5-Day Chan retreat

Leader: Eddy Street, Venue: Barmoor, North Yorkshire

(Details to be advised soon – refer to the website for updates)

Suitable both for beginners and for experienced practitioners.

Late October / Early November 7-Day Silent Illumination Retreat

(dates/venue to be confirmed – consult the website)

Leader: Simon Child

This traditional week-long retreat will allow the time and space for serious practitioners to learn, practice and cultivate the Chinese Zen method of Silent Illumination. Simple yet difficult, within this space you may encounter an opening that allows you to come to rest and find freedom, peace and lucidity. This is not a place to opt out but enables effective engagement with daily life.

Facilitated in a kindly and supportive manner we will present the teaching and methods of Master Sheng-yen, through practice, talks and individual interviews. The format will be that of a full Chan retreat, rising early, with a rigorous schedule of meditation, work periods, and exercise.

Requires prior attendance at a 5 day retreat.

November 10th – 15th 5-Day Western Zen Retreat

Leader: Jake Lyne, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

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Suitable both for beginners and for experienced practitioners.

December 8th – 15th 7-Day Huatou Retreat

Leader: Simon Child, Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales

A Hua-tou is a short, paradoxical statement, often the punch line of a Koan, or a challenging, maybe confronting, question. You will be shown a collection of such texts from which you may choose the one on which to work, both in traditional seated meditation and throughout daily activity. While intensive focus is required, we do not push practitioners into excessive effort and the approach is rooted in compassion. Such practice often leads to major insights into the Dharma and one's "True nature".

Requires prior attendance at a 5 day retreat.

Other Chan Events of Interest

Several WCF groups organise additional events such as day retreats from time to time. Keep an eye on their web-pages at www.westernchanfellowship.org/local-groups.html

In 2012 Simon Child will lead the following retreats outside the WCF. Consult the website for details.

- 7-Day Koan Retreat at Gaia House February 4th – 11th (with Fiona Nuttall).
- 7-Day Silent Illumination Retreat in Warsaw, Poland, March 2nd – 9th.
- 5-Day Western Zen Retreat in New York, USA, mid-October (with Hilary Richards).
- 10-Day Silent Illumination Retreat in New York, USA, late-November.

The Annual General Meeting of the Western Chan Fellowship

The 2012 meeting will be held on **Saturday 28th January 2012** at

Unit 16, Griffin Mill, London Road, Thrupp, Stroud, Glos GL5 2AZ

This will take the form of a Sangha day with a lunch with a walk available for those who wish to participate. There will be elections **and the appointment of a new Teacher** following Chan Master Dr John Crook's death in July 2011.

Full details of the arrangements will be circulated by email to all WCF members at the beginning of January. If you have changed your email address please notify the admin secretary Hugh Carroll.

Membership of the Western Chan Fellowship

We now offer two categories of membership:

- **Associate membership** is available if you have undergone a formal Refuge ceremony with an authorised teacher and agree to follow the five Lay Precepts of Buddhism (not killing, not stealing, not lying, no sexual misconduct and not misusing intoxicants), according to your own sincere interpretation and to the best of your ability. Refuge may have been taken with a teacher of the Western Chan Fellowship or in another Buddhist organisation, it doesn't matter which, you undertake to carry out a regular personal practice of Buddhism, and you support the Western Chan Fellowship and their local Chan Group if there is one nearby.
- **Full membership** is available if you must meet the criteria specified in Section E of the Constitution of the WCF, principally this refers to attendance at three or more of our retreats including both Western Zen and seven-day Chan retreats, and undertakings regarding personal practice.

To facilitate membership applications, particularly associate membership, **Refuge ceremonies** will be offered from time to time at local group events by authorised WCF retreat leaders as well as at the end of some retreats.

Application / Standing Order / Gift Aid forms are available on the website at www.westernchanfellowship.org/membership.html

Membership Subscriptions

These are payable annually, and fall due on 1st January each year. To reduce the administrative burden we encourage all members to pay by standing order. This should be submitted to your bank now so that payment can arrive by 1st January. The forms and bank details are on the website at: www.westernchanfellowship.org/membership.html

Mailings

We have posted this programme to you because your details are held on our database as someone who has attended retreats in the past or expressed an interest in our programme. If you do not wish to receive mailings please contact our membership secretary Hugh Carroll admin@westernchanfellowship.org or c/o 18 Chandos Close, Swindon, SN5 6AH, UK