



## Western Ch'an Fellowship

Registered Charity No. 1068637

Newsletter No. 3 May 1999

There will be a **weekend retreat in Bristol** on Sat 23rd and Sun 24th Oct at the Unitarian Church, Brunswick Square. Probably 10am till 6pm on Sat and 10 till 4pm on Sun. The weekend will be led by Rigdzin Shikpo (Michael Hookham) of the Longchen Foundation in Oxford. Ring Alysun Jones on 01934 842017 for further details nearer the time. The **Bristol Ch'an Group** is ten years old this year and will hold a retreat to mark the occasion on the weekend of Dec 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>.

A group in the **East Midlands (NEW)** has formed recently. The next (second) meeting is on Thursday May 20th at 8, Park Terrace, The Park, Nottingham NG1 5DN at 7.30pm. Further information from Hilary Richards or Pamela Hopkinson.

**The South Manchester Ch'an Group (NEW)** meets every Wednesday from 7:30p.m. The venue is Stockport Unitarian Church, Stockport Road, Cheadle, just opposite Chorlton Drive and the BP petrol station. You can find it off Junction 11 of the M60 (formerly M63), turn right at the roundabout, and go through one set of traffic lights. The Church is about 100 yards further on, on the left. There is parking facility within the church grounds.

We are a new group, having begun on 13/1/99. We have a range of experience as meditators from well established to absolute beginners and all serious (serious = committed rather than serious = miserable!) investigators of the Dharma will be more than welcome. The format is usually greetings and chat followed by two silent sitting periods which are broken by a little kinhin (walking meditation). Then there is opportunity for a little sharing of practice problems/insights if required. We aim to vacate the church by 9:30 p.m. The meeting, practice and instruction is free, but a donation of approx. £2 towards the cost of the room-hire would be kindly received. Contact Ron Henshall on 0161 491 0612 or email him at: ron.henshall@zen.co.uk

The **Bury (North Manchester)** group holds day retreats approximately once every six to eight weeks. Contact Simon Child.

**The Swindon Group** is not formally affiliated with any lineage but has strong connections with the Western Ch'an Fellowship. We sit on Monday evenings and have the familiar format of liturgy, 25 minutes sit, kinhin, a further 25 minutes sit and an ending liturgy. We've been going for 8 years and

sometimes do extended sessions on Sunday's near full moon days. We have a pretty democratic structure and rotate tasks like time-keeping and doing the finances. There is a fairly good wee library and we're keen on inter-group connections, exchanges and so on.

**The York Group** will hold a day retreat entitled "**An Introduction to Silent Illumination**" on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June. Contact Jake Lynes or James McCarthy.

**Other Groups** will be featured in future newsletters.

The next meeting of the **Executive Committee of the WCF** will be on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999. If there are any matters that you wish to be raised at the meeting then please contact a committee member.

### Notes From The Network Of Buddhist Organizations

The Network of Buddhist Organizations, of which the WCF is a member, is beginning to evolve into a more effective and cohesive entity, and at the same time is beginning to take on some of the characteristics of an organization in its own right. Not everyone is entirely happy about that, but it is probably inevitable if it is ever to move on and become more effective. It remains committed to an open membership and to the free exchange of views and ideas.

There is some evidence that by this means we are slowly bringing down the barriers between the different Buddhist groups in Britain, and on occasions the Network has been asked to put forward a Buddhist point of view on matters such as The Millennium Dome etc. On such occasions, everyone has been meticulously careful to speak in broad terms so as to remain inclusive. This can lead to a sort of institutional blandness, but the alternative is that a Buddhist perspective is not put forward effectively by anyone, and that would be a shame in the present climate.

At the recent AGM, a number of issues were discussed. A Steering Group has now formed to support and help the Secretary, Paul Seto, who has a monumental task. This Steering Group has an open membership so that a clique is not allowed to form. A constitution has been hammered out, with a great deal of soul-searching, and we hope to submit it shortly to the Charity Commissioners. There is some money in the Bank and we shall soon have to decide a policy as to how these funds should be used.

Work is going ahead to try to provide improved materials to assist teachers of Religious Education in schools. We have also agreed to Sponsor a Sutra at the British Library. In addition we have agreed to support the new Tibetan Peace Garden to be opened by H.H. The Dalai Lama in May. This garden is being created outside the Imperial War Museum, and as much of the money held by the NBO comes from the sale of the video of the Dalai Lama's last visit, we felt that this would be a very appropriate project to support.

We have submitted ideas for the 'Spirit Section' of the Millennium Dome. This was quite controversial as a number of people felt that as the Dome is accompanied by a great deal of commercialism and hype, it would be better to remain aloof. However, as eight other faiths are due to be represented there, we felt that we should have a space along with the others, and we chose the keywords Peace and Compassion as our primary themes.

Some people may have heard of a scandal within the ranks of the British Shingon Buddhist Association. A member of the BSBA came along and we were able to have a brief discussion about their difficulties. There was a spirit of openness and support, and compassion for those who have been hurt. I hope to take this problem up again at a future date, especially as it was a scandal such as this which was instrumental in generating the NBO in the first place.

The NBO exists primarily to provide a talking shop to enable Buddhists from various traditions to meet and discover common ground. Barriers of suspicion have to be gradually worn down, but after four years I see real signs of progress. If anyone would like to know more detail on any topic, please contact me, Sally Masheder, by phone on 0117 9248819, or by post to 6, Tyne Rd., Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8EE.

### **Women are Fellows too!**

The word Fellow may have masculine overtones for some, and this was discussed extensively when we were forming the WCF and deciding the name. We chose the name because it matched our hope of developing a sense of community and fellowship, and there are of course precedents - it is perfectly normal for a Fellow of an Oxbridge college to be female and in legal terms it covers both genders.

Women are under-represented in the WCF, probably due to the historical fact that, for whatever reasons, they have been under-represented in terms of retreat attendance in the past.

There has been a suggestion from some quarters that

some people find the retreat conditions too harsh in various ways. No doubt this applies to both men and women, and for all these it is worth noting that facilities at Maenllwyd have improved considerably recently. We have had donations enabling us to buy sixteen new beds and mattresses, and for the past couple of years hot showers have been available. Sanitary arrangements have also improved with the new toilet facilities in the Ch'an Hall - no more Thunderboxes!

We would like to encourage more women to attend retreats, and make it clear that women who are qualified to become Fellows are welcome to join and put their voices to the future development of the WCF.

### **How to join the WCF**

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.

### **Fundraising!**

The Western Ch'an Fellowship does not in fact actually need to raise any funds as it can function on the standard retreat fees, New Ch'an Forum subscriptions, and Fellows' annual subscriptions. However part of the purpose of the formation of the WCF, and subsequent registration as a charity, is to help those less able to pay the retreat charges. For this purpose we have a bursary fund, established by a very generous single anonymous donation of over £1000, and augmented by further donations since, which is being used to subsidise those who are less able or unable to meet the costs from their own resources. This has already helped several people over the last twelve months, and of course we wish to continue to do so. We need to replenish the fund on an ongoing basis or else it will soon be depleted. To some extent, depending on the retreat bookings, we may be able to do this from any surplus left over after retreat expenses, but of course we would welcome further donations whether large or small. Besides the

bursary fund we can also accept donations for other purposes e.g. development of the library at Maenllwyd (already several hundred pounds worth of books have been provided by donations), support of local meditation groups, facilities for retreats (recent generous donations have provided beds at Maenllwyd), general funds of the WCF (which may be allocated to specific purposes as deemed most appropriate by the committee), and we may establish a "sinking fund" for reserves for any future capital projects.

### **How to Make Donations (Dana)**

Non-taxpayers should simply send their donations to the treasurer Tim Blanc. Tax payers will prefer to use the more tax efficient methods of making donations to registered charities. For single donations over £250 we can use the Gift Aid scheme - ask Tim Blanc for the form to fill in and send it back with your donation and he can reclaim the tax. For smaller donations we cannot reclaim the tax ourselves but you may wish to make use of the Charity Card scheme managed by the Charities Aid Foundation.

### **Charity Cards**



Some of you have said that you do not know how the Charity Card scheme operates. Firstly you register with the scheme by calling CAF on 0800 993311 and they will send you an information pack. You open an account with them, make payments into it, and then whenever you want you may donate all or part of the funds in that account to any registered charity, either by a telephone call or by posting a "cheque" form provided. The advantage is that they

### **Western Ch'an Fellowship Contacts:**

**Teacher** Dr John Crook Winterhead Hill Farm, Winscombe, N. Somerset, BS25 1RS Johcro@compuserve.com

**Chair** Hilary Richards 8 Park Terrace The Park Nottingham, NG1 5DN, Tel 0115 924 2075  
Hilary@theview.demon.co.uk

**Secretary** Simon Child 24 Woodgate Ave, Bury, Lancs, BL9 7RU, Tel 0161 761 1945 Fax 0161 763 3221.  
wcf@child.demon.co.uk

**Treasurer and Membership Secretary** Tim Blanc 26 Hinton Rd Greenbank, Bristol, BS5 6HB  
tblanc@globalnet.co.uk

**New Ch'an Forum Editor** Pamela Hopkinson, 2 The Hall, Middleton, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 4LX  
Tel 01629 822170 Fax 01629 825435 pamela@phopkins.demon.co.uk

**Western Ch'an Fellowship Webpages** <http://child.demon.co.uk/wcf/> (includes 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

reclaim the income tax that you have paid and then add it to your account (less an administration charge and a donation to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) such that for each £100 you pay into your account they will add £23. Thus you can donate whatever sum you first thought of, and then still have **free money** left to give a further donation either to WCF or to any other charity. You may not use the cards to purchase goods or services, so you may not use these funds for retreat fees, NCF subscriptions, or Fellowship annual subscriptions. See <http://www.charitycard.org>

### **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. 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 below. 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.

### **Newsletter**

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.

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>

**Local Groups Contacts:**

**Brighton** John Mitchell 01275 846261,

**Bury N Manchester** Simon Child 0161 7611945,

**Cheadle, S Manchester** Ron Henshall 0161 4910612,

**E Midlands**, Hilary Richards 0115 9242075,

**Glastonbury**, Ned Reiter 01458 833663,

**Swindon** John Senior 01793 613940,

**Bristol** Caroline Paine 0117 9245332,

**Cardiff** Eddy Street 01222 691146,

**Cotswolds** Alec Lawless 01285 659171,

**Edinburgh** Frank Tait 01721 721146,

**London** Bruce Stevenson 0181 9617802,

**York** Jake Lynes 01904 639893.

**Important Notice**

**Western Ch'an Fellowship**

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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), 26 Hinton Road, Bristol BS5 6HB

**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

Tel

Address

Fax

e-mail