



www.westernchanfellowship.org

October 2016

NEWSLETTER 31

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP NEWS AND PROGRAMMES

Welcome to Newsletter 31. This introduces our 2017 retreat programme and also brings you news of other WCF activities.

Our 2016 retreat programme has been overbooked on all events, with many people on waiting lists being disappointed by being unable to obtain places on retreat. In response to this we are increasing our capacity in 2017, running more retreats and using a larger venue for our August retreat, Crosby Hall Educational Centre near Liverpool. Come and join us!



In addition to our residential retreats there are many other opportunities for you to practise with us, such as at local group events and day retreats (see page 5-6). You may also wish to participate in events led by WCF leaders at other venues outside the WCF programme such as at Gaia House in June and in Europe or USA (see page 5).

We are also introducing new types of events (see details inside) such as a stone carving and meditation course and Chinese brush painting. In March in Bristol there will be a seminar with Stephen Batchelor on “Early Buddhism and the Four Great Vows”

WCF has also been busy in other ways. Over the last 12 months we have run a training course for our group leaders which included three residential modules as well as course work and reading between modules. Look out for the next issue of New Chan Forum which will give more details on that. Also many of our local groups participated in the NBO coordinated Buddhist Action Month as well as organising local events and day retreats.

2017 Programme of retreats and other events

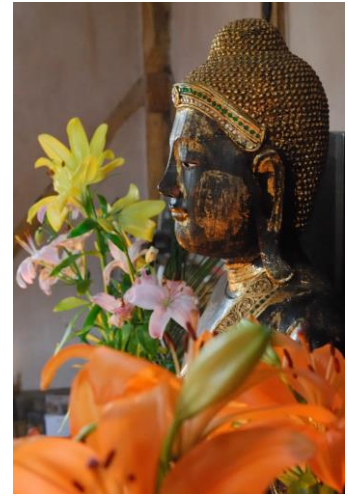
PLEASE REFER TO THE WEBSITE AT WWW.W-C-F.ORG/Q342 FOR THE LATEST UPDATES AND MORE DETAILS.

7TH – 14TH JANUARY: SILENT ILLUMINATION 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADERS: SIMON CHILD AND JAKE LYNE. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

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.



13TH – 17TH FEBRUARY: A TASTE OF CHAN 4-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: HAGG FARM, DERBYSHIRE

An opportunity to experience the traditional style of a formal, silent Chan retreat over 5 days. 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.

25TH FEBRUARY – 2ND MARCH: WESTERN ZEN 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

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.

11TH – 18TH MARCH: SILENT ILLUMINATION 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

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.

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1ST – 8TH APRIL: SHATTERING THE GREAT DOUBT 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

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. 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.

29TH APRIL – 4TH MAY: WESTERN ZEN 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

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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.

May/June: Connected Practice: ENHANCE YOUR PRACTICE IN YOUR OWN ENVIRONMENT

CO-ORDINATOR: HILARY RICHARDS

Join us in a commitment for a period of connected and enhanced practice. We will undertake this in our daily lives, whether at home or in the workplace, with the silent support of knowing that we are not practising alone. We intend to raise the tempo of our practice for this period, increasing our capacity to be aware in our daily lives. A Mindfulness Bell will be rung at noon every day, when all participants may pause and be joined in the silence that the bell marks. Members of our Sangha may use this opportunity in different and creative ways. Open to all. Dates will be confirmed and announced on the website in a few weeks. To join in email: connected-practice@westernchanfellowship.org or phone 0117 3300581 nearer the time once the dates have been announced. More information at: <http://w-c-f.org/Q372-397>

27TH MAY – 3RD JUNE: SILENT ILLUMINATION 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: BALA BROOK RETREAT CENTRE, DEVON

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.

29TH JULY – 3RD AUGUST: WESTERN ZEN 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

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.

19TH – 26TH AUGUST: SHATTERING THE GREAT DOUBT 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD AND FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: CROSBY HALL EDUCATIONAL TRUST, LIVERPOOL

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. 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. This venue <http://www.chetcentre.org.uk> has a larger capacity than our usual retreats so do come and join us for this summer retreat.

AUTUMN 2017 RETREATS

Details will be published on the website shortly

FOR INFORMATION

We list here some retreats which are outside the WCF programme but may be of interest to WCF retreatants.

SILENT ILLUMINATION RETREAT: POLAND 18TH – 25TH MARCH 2017

Simon Child will lead retreat at Dłużew, near Warsaw, Poland. Teaching and interviews are in English, with Polish interpretation available if required. International applications welcomed. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1790>

SILENT ILLUMINATION RETREAT IN USA: MAY 2017

Simon Child will lead this retreat in late May at Dharma Drum Retreat Center, upstate New York. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1135>

INVESTIGATING KOANS AT GAIA HOUSE: UK JUNE 2017

Simon Child and Jake Lyne will lead this retreat at Gaia House. For details and booking visit the Gaia House website: <http://gaiahouse.co.uk/gh/retreat/investigating-koans/>

21-DAY CHAN RETREAT IN POLAND: JULY 30TH – AUGUST 20TH 2017

Ven. Chi Chern Fashi will lead a 21-day Chan meditation retreat at Dłużew, near Warsaw, Poland. International applications welcomed. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1880>

WESTERN ZEN RETREAT RETREAT IN USA: OCTOBER 2017

Simon Child will lead this retreat with Rebecca Li and Hilary Richards in October at Dharma Drum Retreat Center, upstate New York. Details: <http://w-c-f.org/Q367#c1135>

DAY RETREATS AND OTHER LOCAL EVENTS

Several local groups arrange day retreats and other events from time to time.

See the website events page <http://w-c-f.org/Q342> and individual group pages at <http://w-c-f.org/Q3> for details of events.

Events known at the date of going to press are listed below but please also contact your local group to be informed of other and future events:

Sleaford Chan Group is holding a **Chinese Brush Painting Day** on 19th November. Contact Juliet: sleafordchan@westernchanfellowship.org or 07717 098 321

Salisbury Chan Group is holding a **practice day** on Sunday 20th November 2016. There are limited places so please Henry Gray if you wish to attend. mrhenrygray@mac.com Tel: 01722 341372 Mob: 07766464048 for details of venue and programme.

Manchester Chan Group will hold a **day retreat** on Saturday 26th November. Details at <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-286>

Portsmouth Chan Group will hold a **Rohatsu Day Retreat** Sunday 11th December. Contact George Marsh at: portsmouthchan@westernchanfellowship.org Tel: 023 9235 7783.



Bristol Chan Group will hold a **day retreat** in Bristol on 15th January led by Pat Simmons. We will be focusing particularly on loving kindness. Contact Pat: patsimmons.cet22@yahoo.com 0117 977 4683 / 07443 479363

Bristol: A seminar with Stephen Batchelor on Early Buddhism and the Four Great Vows. Saturday 4th March, Bristol. The earliest Buddhist teachings can be understood as offering a means to transform oneself and society. Stephen argues that the presentation of Noble 'Truths' is a later interpretation of the early teachings and tends to direct attention towards dogma, which was never the Buddha's intention. He argues that these teachings reveal the Buddha as a pragmatic ethicist rather than metaphysicist, and shows how the four Noble Truths can become four integrated practices for awakened living that can be practised moment to moment. Details at <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-297>

Wiltshire, Stone Carving and Meditation Weekend. April 29th – 1st May. Henry Gray is the owner of Gray's Stone Carving Studio near Salisbury, where he teaches stone carving to all ages and abilities. He has been practising Chan with The Western Chan Fellowship for the last 10 years.



This course is suitable for beginners and experienced meditation practitioners, and beginners and experienced stone carvers. A focus of the course will be the 'doing' aspect of practice - on the bringing together of body and mind through a work practice. The three days will be interspersed with body exercises, carving, sitting practice

(zazen), walks and short talks. Although this is not a silent retreat, principles of a Chan (zen) retreat will be adopted, for example, there will be some liturgy, a short talk each day, some sitting practice (zazen) periods; however most of the 'formal' practice will be the 'work' periods. There will be plenty of short breaks and instruction on linking body and breath in activity, listening to the stone, tool handling skills and stone carving techniques.

The course is non-residential. Camping is available for free, or Henry can recommend local B&B's. Details at <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-288>

Lizard Chan Group, Cornwall: Fiona Nuttall will lead a weekend retreat at Roselidden Farm, Cornwall, 13th – 14th May. Contact Sophie Muir, Tel 01326 221651.

TWIRL THAT PEN!

PLEASE SEND US MATERIAL FOR THE NEW CHAN FORUM

Articles: Any lively articles relevant to Chan learning and Chan living would be most welcome. We need to create the New Chan Forum for ourselves, in the way we want it to be. And please keep the retreat reports coming! They are very highly valued contributions to the understanding of the power of the retreat process.

Images, including artwork, drawings, photographs, and also poems, haiku and haibun would be very much appreciated.

If these or other ideas stimulate you then please contact the editor George Marsh, at editor@westernchanfellowship.org, who will be more than happy to discuss with you how any idea can be taken forward.

NATIONAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

BUDDHISM IN ACTION: WHAT ARE WE DOING?

You may like to attend the **Network of Buddhist Organisations AGM** in London on 5th November with the theme: "Buddhism in action: what are we doing?" <http://www.nbo.org.uk/2016/09/18/nbo-gathering-and-agm-information/>



If you want to discuss NBO matters then contact our NBO representative Juliet Hackney at: sleafordchan@westernchanfellowship.org or 07717 098 321.

HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY AND PRISON CHAPLAINCY

Please contact Juliet (as above) if you are interested in finding out about Healthcare or Prison Chaplaincy. <http://www.nbo.org.uk/2016/10/24/buddhist-healthcare-chaplaincy-introductory-courses-2017/>

INTER FAITH WEEK

Inter Faith Week <http://www.interfaithweek.org/> is November 13th – 26th with many events around the country during that week.

RETREAT BOOKING CONDITIONS

In 2015 we made two changes to our cancellation policy. Cancellations within two weeks of a retreat will result in forfeit of the entire fee; previously it was 50% of the fee. The other change is that we may still offer a refund, after deducting an administration charge, if there are significant compassionate grounds for a cancellation, but only with independent evidence such as a medical certificate, and even then this is at our discretion. Previously we would have offered a refund if a request was made in writing on compassionate grounds, without the requirement for independent verification.

The reason for this change is that we have noticed an increase in late cancellations recently. We are not alone; other Buddhist organisations have noticed the same problem. Many of these cancellations are for genuine reasons, but it seems likely that some people book in order to reserve a place for themselves in case they decide to come. When people have emailed to claim significant compassionate grounds some have not given any details, e.g. "I was not able to attend due to significant compassionate grounds", which leaves us wondering how significant those compassionate grounds were. Rather than tasking our admin secretary with an investigation to establish the reasons in more detail, we have opted for placing the burden of proof on the person cancelling; hence the need for independent evidence.

Many of our retreats are overbooked with a waiting list. Late cancellations don't usually give us time to alert people on the waiting list and so places that could have been filled by people who are keen to come on retreat are left empty. This is a shame and something we are keen to avoid.

More details at: <http://w-c-f.org/Q24#c1932>

MAILINGS

If you no longer wish to receive postal mailings, please help us save printing and postage costs by notifying admin@westernchanfellowship.org