



FWBO and TBMSG News

April 2009

Inside this month:

Creativity Conference coming up; Buddhafield seeks volunteers; new centre in Belgium; UK Buddhist 'Safety Net' launched; stories from Hungary, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, Germany; and India. FWBO photographic archives, Youth events and Urban Retreat...

volunteer with
buddhafield cafe

it takes all shapes and sizes

Buddhafield 2009

Buddhafield is a creative meeting point between the urgent environmental concerns of today & the timeless relevance of Buddhist teachings. The Buddhafield collective runs a tight Livelihood cafe, catering retreats, an annual festival & owns land for holding the retreats, creating sacred spaces and developing permaculture ideals.

The Buddhafield cafe runs on a potent mix of commitment, generosity, hardwork, passion, practical Dharma (a recycled cardboard) whilst bringing a sense of openness, positivity & community to a diverse range of people. It exists on an edge between traditional Buddhist values, and the hedonistic festival culture, treading a path along which can become a rewarding spiritual practice.

The cafe aims to tread lightly on the earth by reducing and recycling as much of its waste as possible, and producing food that is locally sourced, organic, fairly traded & vegan. Volunteering in the cafe provides real and meaningful opportunities to make all of your life your practice. The team also say that working in the cafe is about: friendships, family, play, cooking good food and experiencing magic...

Volunteer for these festivals
arriving a day before and after if possible
Samsara 28 - 31 July
Buddhafield 15 - 19 August
By Green 28 - 3 August
Wisdoms 11 - 13 September

to be confirmed:
Greenman 21 - 23 August
One of the Others 18 - 20 September
Contact: info@buddhafield.org
Tel: 0115 950 3100
0115 950 3100
www.buddhafield.org

FWBO News

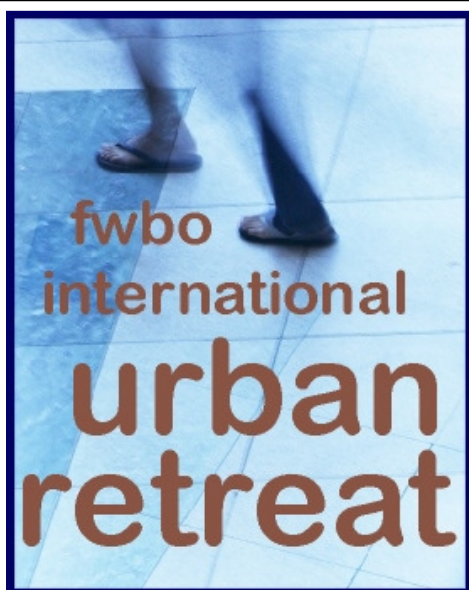
presents a monthly or bi-monthly anthology of stories illustrating some of what's going on across the FWBO – the worldwide network of Buddhist centres, businesses, communities, arts events, and individual projects that makes up the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha in India.

Enjoy...

on the web at:

www.fwbo-news.org | news@fwbo-news.org

Three ideas for 2009...



June 2009 will see the
FWBO's first ever
International Urban retreat.

These have been pioneered
at a few FWBO centres over
the past few years, and have
proven both popular and
effective.

The dates are
20-27th June 2009.

Ethical banking with Triodos

Could this be the year you switch to ethical banking? Following the recent wave of financial crisis and scandal, Triodos, the UK's most actively ethical bank, report - "61% of those interviewed who have a banking product, said that they now wanted to know more about how their bank invests their money".

FWBO members in the UK already have over £750,000 deposited with Triodos, and they have for many years been the lender of choice for new FWBO projects, financing many of the FWBO's communities and Right Livelihood businesses.

Triodos have recently launched a new range of savings accounts - and there's a free copy of the popular 'Go Slow England' book on offer to new customers. If you want to know more about where your savings are going, and to be more confident they're being used for the good; try looking into Triodos...

When you join there's an option to donate some of the interest payable to one or another charity - including the FWBO.

Although small compared to the high street giants, Triodos are a fully-fledged bank, describing themselves as "a fully independent bank and a pioneer of sustainable and transparent banking". They say "Our mission is to make money work for positive social, environmental and cultural change."

The Triodos Bank logo, featuring the word "Triodos" in a serif font, a green circular icon with a stylized 'T' inside, and the word "Bank" in a serif font, all on a dark blue background.



**Got some time? Want to work on yourself?
Do a Karuna appeal!**

Since 1980 the FWBO's Karuna Trust has been funding social and Dhamma projects amongst India's poorest and most disadvantaged communities. The majority of its funds are raised by volunteer fundraisers, who live and work as a spiritual community during the five or so weeks of the door-knocking appeal. This form of fundraising was pioneered by Karuna in 1982: ever since, Karuna's been developing such fundraising as a context for engaged Buddhist practice.



Karuna are currently recruiting for their 2009 Appeals.

SATURDAY, MAY 02, 2009

Lokamitra on India: two articles and a photographic archive



We conclude this week's series of stories on India with some photographs from the early days of TBMSG, as the FWBO is known in India. For the curious, TBMSG stands for 'Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana', the "Friends of the Great Buddhist Sangha of the Triple World".

These are part of Lokamitra's archive and have been added to the [FWBO Photos](#) collection on Flickr, which now hosts over

3,800 photographs from all over the FWBO and TBMSG.

Click here to play a [slideshow of the images](#).

To complement the slides we have posted two articles by Lokamitra, one describing his first experiences of India and one looking back after 30 years of work helping to create TBMSG.

Click here to read [The Day that Changed my Life](#):

www.fwbo-news.org/features/The%20day%20that%20changed%20my%20life%20-%20Lokamitra.pdf

And here for [30 Years in India](#):

www.fwbo-news.org/features/Lokamitra%20-%2030%20Years%20in%20India.pdf

Both are moving testimonies of the situation in India and the amount that has been achieved through people working together, inspired by a common vision.

For further reading, we recommend 'Jai Bhim', Nagabodhi's book-length account of the revival of Buddhism in India and the part Sangharakshita, Lokamitra, and many others played in it. It's now available on-line on Sangharakshita's website at www.sangharakshita.org/bookshelf/jaibhim.pdf.

FRIDAY, MAY 01, 2009

A Green Elephant in Sydney: fundraising for India



Last summer, after feverish weeks of preparation, the [Green Elephant Buddhist charity shop](#) opened in Sydney, Australia, close to the FWBO's Sydney Buddhist Centre.

Varada reports -

"The project is the brainchild of two women Dhammamitras, both of whom have asked for ordination. They have since been joined by a third women mitra, who also has asked for ordination. She gave up her well paid, part-time job in IT to become the shop manager, which is the only paid position in the shop.

"The profits from the shop, once they are fully established and have paid off the loans taken out for set-up expenses will be divided 60% to the projects for women and children in India, such as those run by [Arya Tara Mahila Trust](#), and 40% to the **Sydney**. The public has responded warmly and strongly to the shop, and are very interested in the Indian women's projects being supported.

"Already in only a few months of operation the shop is breaking even and should soon be able to start paying off the loans taken out. We hope to make a profit distribution this financial year.

"An enormous amount of vision, planning, enthusiasm and hard work is going into this project to provide money that will benefit women and children in India.

"Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu"



THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009

New issue of Varada: women's social projects in India

The Arya Tara Mahila Trust (ATMT) is an all-women's project in India run by Order Members and Mitras from TBMSG. They've just released the second edition of their newsletter Varada. You'll find it on-line here:

www.fwbo-news.org/features/VARADA_Feb_2009.pdf

They say - "Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter and another chance to catch up on developments in women's projects in India. Full details are on our website www.indiansisters.org.

"Despite the heat of early April, another new project successfully was launched in Pune. It is a community-based social project for girls and young women living in slums. We have started work in five slums in the Vishrantwadi area, Pune. The project is for teenage girls from 11 to 20 years of age who either go to school or have dropped out for some reason. We are including aspects of personality development, helping to develop self-confidence, negotiation skills, communication skills and also vocational courses so that the young women will be able to earn something and develop confidence about life. Another new Right Livelihood venture we have helped with is Mudita Screen Printers in Nagpur".

Karunaprabha, the team leader of this new venture explains why these projects are needed: "In the news almost every day we hear about India's rapid economic growth. While increasing prosperity is happening for some people, this development is exacerbating the divide between rich and poor. In a recent Pune University survey, 89% of girls/young women were found to be suffering from anaemia. We arrange anaemia detection camps for the girls and then provide the treatment they need".

They continue -

"ATMT is steadily building international links and a network of supporters - in Germany, [Karuna Deutschland](#) has successfully raised an impressive Euro 6000 for ATMT projects. Amoghamati's hard work and the commitment of her team will enable new initiatives to support women's development.

"Two of ATMT's Trustees, Karunadeepa and Jayamani were funded to visit Europe in the summer. They gave talks and took part in retreats in UK, Germany and Holland, raising awareness about ATMT's work and collecting some extra funding too!

"Shakyajata from Manchester, UK, took up the challenge and is now fundraising to sponsor an Indian woman Dhamma teacher to travel with Dhammajyoti team support. Indian women from many backgrounds tell us they benefit from learning to meditate and studying the Buddha's teaching. They feel more confident and happy in their families and their working lives. "And in Croydon, south of London, Sue Bolton has started a cushion making enterprise which will fund poor women to escape the pressure of their family situations by going on retreat where they can rest, study the Dhamma, meet other kindly women, eat good food and meditate. Even the \$2 per day retreat cost is too much for these women to afford despite the benefits of retreat life".

"If you're interested to support us, please see our website where's there's forms to [make a regular donation](#). There's also our JustGiving page at www.justgiving.com/atmt.

"VARADA celebrates the generosity of ATMT's friends across the world".

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2009

Retreat in Tamil Nadu, South India



Continuing this week's theme of stories from FWBO and TBMSG events in India, today we report on a recent TBMSG retreat in Tamil Nadu, South India - which is seeing a revival of Buddhism led in part by graduates from Nagarjuna Training Institute, TBMSG's training centre in Nagpur. They say -

"Namo Buddha. We are graduates of NTI in Nagpur. We are happy to inform you recently we arranged a three days retreat in Pallavoyal village, 70 kms from Chennai in Tamil Nadu. NTI has trained over 500

people from over 18 states in India.

"This was the first of its kind retreat in Tamil Nadu, it brought together Ambedkarites from various districts of Tamil Nadu, well wishers from Sri Lanka including Dhammachari Jinasena, and others including Dhammachari Viradhamma of the San Francisco Buddhist Centre. The ex-students of Nagarjuna Training Institute (NTI) constituted the core of the retreat organisation, arrangement and co-ordination. Over 120 men and women participated in this retreat.

"The major components of the retreat were Group Meditation, Dhamma Talks, Buddhist Formalities, Chanting Buddhist songs, Group Discussions and Buddhist Cultural Activities, it was a great help to revive Dhamma in the South India.

"In the beginning of the retreat, a small meeting was arranged between Buddhists from Sri Lanka and people in Tamil Nadu to clear misperceptions about current ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Media and hardliners across the strait are trying to fuel enmity on religious lines and propaganda is trying to show that Buddhists in Sri Lanka are pro-war and are party to present war in Sri Lanka. This propaganda is creating negative impression of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and the people inclined towards Buddhism in Tamil Nadu, mostly the followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar, get confused about role and involvement of Buddhism. However, Sri Lankan delegates made it clear that majority of the Buddhist monks and laities do not support the war and they are extending the humanitarian help to the people affected by war in North Sri Lanka.

"The theme of the retreat was why Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar chose Buddhism, and his key points regarding Buddhism. Dh. Lokamitra gave two talks, which were followed by discussions in the small group. Dh. Lokamitra also introduced two meditation practices.

"Tamil Nadu is a new situation for Buddhism, though it has the 100 year history of revival of Buddhism initiated by Pandit Iyothee Thass, who hailed from the untouchable castes, and saw in Buddhism the potential to end caste system. There is an overwhelming response to the teachings and people are keen to explore Buddhism.

"The images of the Buddha are found all over Tamil Nadu. The images are very beautiful and of artistic excellence. At one place, the famous image of Manimekalai, the famous Buddhist nun in Tamil literature, was also found.

"In all, Tamil Nadu like most of the states of India is having huge potential for revival of Buddhism and this retreat is one of the initiatives, there is so much still remains to be done to make Buddhist teachings available to millions of people here. The members of the Sakya Hostels took tremendous pains to make this event a great success.

"Thanking you, with all our metta. Dhammamitra S. Jayasridhar, Visuddhalok, Tamil Nadu".

The photograph shows Lokamitra, who led the retreat, with some of the participants from Sri Lanka. Tomorrow we report on developments in ATMT, the women's Dhamma and Social project in India.

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2009

Fire in India: Jeevak social work building badly damaged



Karunadipa, Director of Jeevak, TBMSG's woman's social project in Dapodi, India, has sent us this report -

"For twenty years I have been working for Jeevak - we are a team of women doing social and educational work in the slums of Pune. We serve the needs of 200,000 women and their

families, providing basic healthcare, life-skills training, legal support and a thriving micro-credit scheme.



"By now you must have heard that fire broke out last month in Jeevak building and the medical and creche in Jeevak has been burnt down because of a short circuit, especially the medical project has been completely destroyed, 5 fire brigade came for help.

"We are fortunate that the whole building did not catch fire or else it would have been a great loss. The fire broke out in the early hours in the

morning about 4am on 16th March, since then we have been very busy clearing up the burnt heap. The ground floor looks terrible hence the medical unit has been closed down.

"WE NEED HELP to set up the ground floor for painting, fixing new doors, windows, grills, complete new wiring, electrification etc, which will cost at least 5 lac (about UK £7,000) for renovation of the building, it will be good if you will be able to give this news in the FWBO news letter.

We have a fundraising page at www.justgiving.com/karunadipa.

Thank you."

"With Metta Karunadeepa"

MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2009

Social activism in Hungary: the Jai Bhim Network



This is an unusual article for the FWBO News.

Regular readers will know of the close connections between the FWBO/TBMSG in the West and India - they are two names for the same Sangha. Less well known are their connections with the Roma gypsies of rural Hungary - where there is a growing Buddhist sangha within the gypsy community there. This came about by chance when, a little over five years ago, a group from that community made contact with Subhuti and others from the FWBO. You can read previous FWBO News stories [here](http://www.fwbo-news.org/labels/Hungary.html):

www.fwbo-news.org/labels/Hungary.html. The photograph shows

Tibor Derdk: a mitra, Buddhist and local gypsy activist.

They had heard about the work of Dr. Ambedkar in India and had been deeply impressed by what they had read of his work and the suffering of his people, the Dalits, or 'untouchables' of India. They had in fact come to feel a deep connection with the Dalits of India, even, to see themselves as the Dalits of Europe and Dr Ambedkar's message of social transformation as being deeply relevant for them. In many ways the prejudice they face in Hungary is indeed comparable to the prejudice faced by the Dalits in India - see for example an article in today's [New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) exploring the current "wave of violence" against gypsy families.

Recently Saul Deason, a mitra from the FWBOs North London Buddhist Centre, visited the [Jai Bhim Network](http://www.jaibhim.hu) (www.jaibhim.hu) in remote rural Hungary - a social and educational project they'd created, and named in honour of Dr. Ambedkar. This is run by mitras from the local Gypsy community, who had become Buddhists some years previously after being inspired by the example of Dr. Ambedkar and making contact with the FWBO.

When he arrived he found the gypsy community in turmoil. Not speaking Hungarian he did not understand what was happening until, at their request, he collaborated on an article for the Western press, part of an attempt by the local community to draw attention to their plight. You can read it on [FWBO News' Features](http://www.fwbo-news.org/features) page (www.fwbo-news.org/features) or on the Jai Bhim website (click through to the English version).

It gives an insight into the problems of the Gypsies in Hungary and the challenging work of the Buddhists trying to achieve social justice for the downtrodden Gypsy minority.

At the time of writing this, the core of the Jai Bhim sangha is in UK, on retreat with Subhuti, who is himself recently back from Hungary.

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009

Buddhafield prepares for the summer; volunteers needed

Buddhafield is a major FWBO sangha in the West of England. They run the ever-popular Buddhafield Festival, a series of camping retreats through the summer, the Buddhafield Café, an organic vegetable growing business, and manage two very beautiful pieces of land. They also teach meditation at many of

the UK's alternative festivals and have inspired a series of offshoots - Buddhafield North, Buddhafield East, Buddhafield New Zealand...

Right now they are recruiting volunteers for their summer season. Check their website www.buddhafield.com to see what they need - the advert shown is for workers in the Buddhafield Café...

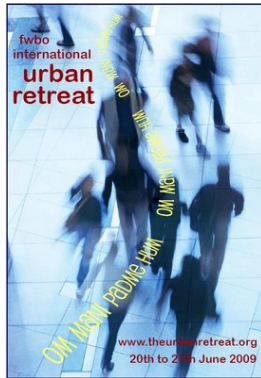
As well as recruiting, they're hard at work preparing their kit for the summer season. There's some great photos of 'Buddhafield backstage' - see for instance "[The Working World of Rupadarshin](#)" on Facebook (you'll need to be logged in to Facebook to see them)

FWBO Photos has lots of them 'in action' see for instance [pictures of last summer's festival](#), or [a meditative journey](#) up to their land at Broadhembury in the beautiful Somerset countryside...

Most importantly though - if you're interested in volunteering with them over the summer, get in touch now!

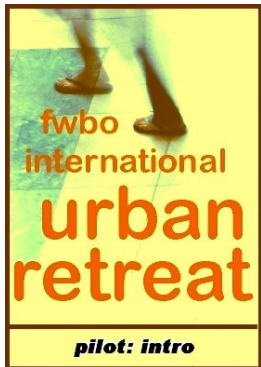
SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2009

Urban Retreat piloted on Facebook



June sees the first-ever International FWBO Urban Retreat, in which some 40 FWBO and TBMSG Centres around the world will be taking part. It's open to all, and all readers of FWBO News are warmly invited to take part.

The retreat has a special website, at www.theurbanretreat.org, on which there's links to the participating FWBO Centres and where you can find basic information on what an Urban Retreat is. We are expecting well over 1,000 people world-wide to participate.



If you don't live near a Centre, that's not a problem, as there is also an on-line version of the retreat. This will start from the [FWBO's page on Facebook](#) and lead participants through a series of day 'Events', each containing a full programme of Dharma and meditation material. Already over 150 people have signed up.

If you're interested in the on-line version, click the link above (you may need to log in to Facebook), go to the FWBO page, become a 'Fan', and look for the Events in the left-hand column... You'll see an 'Urban Retreat' event, and if you register as attending it we'll keep you fully-informed as it unfolds.

This will be the first time we've held a 'virtual retreat' and this week a group of 10 volunteers have been piloting it: in fact the pilot retreat ends today - it's gone very well and a lot has been learned about how to make it 'flow'.

To whet your appetite, here's some excerpts from a retreatants diary who took part in an Urban Retreat held at the LBC in London earlier this year -

Notes on the LBC Urban Retreat

"Sunday morning we set our intentions for the retreat. After sharing a picnic lunch in the new Breathworks space in the LBC's basement, we head upstairs for Sangharakshita's interview, he talks about the early days - fascinating! We then troop back down for the grand unveiling of the 12ft triptych. It is breathtaking.

"Monday morning my flatmate leaves for the daily morning meditation at the LBC while I head off to work chanting a manta as I go. This is to be our routine for the week. Monday evening Parami gives a rousing talk during which I feel rather envious of the people who helped make this all happen back in 1978 - it seems a very passionate and idealistic time.

"Tuesday night Subhadramati gives a moving account of what it means to go for refuge, five order members speak about the point in their lives at which they realised that their going for

refuge had been effective. I love the talks on retreats and hearing of peoples own personal experiences - I come away with something from every speaker, feeling very inspired.

"Wednesday night the 'circle of friendship' talks are kick started by Maitreyabandhu giving a very funny account of the difficult start to his friendship with J---. My friend A---- and I have been thinking about starting a new community and the talks of friendship and community life confirm that this is definitely something we want to pursue. A---- and I both give a talk, I feel nervous but enjoy the experience of sharing the joys of our friendship with everybody in the room. I love her talk which is funny and all about me.

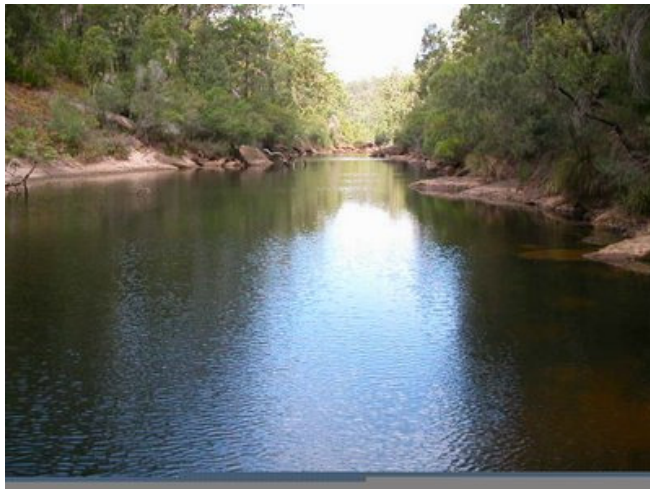
"On Thursday the theme is team based right livelihood, Maria who has taken over the management of the Wild Cherry symbolically lights a candle from Padmasri, who has just told us about the early days of the Cherry and Priyadaka lights a candle from Ratnaguna's candle I have a mental image of Ratnaguna driving around in a van with the side door open selling his wares out of open-topped sacks at markets - I sincerely hope the two businesses survive these tough times. The evening ends on a positive note with Claire handing over a donation from Evolution's profits to the LBC. The full moon puja follows.

"On Friday evening Atula calls up the forces of darkness and later that night there is a fire in the doorway which is to be used as the new entrance - coincidence?

"On Saturday we spent the day reflecting on the retreat and the commitments we made at the start of the week. What an incredible experience this week has been. A huge big Sadhu to Subhadramati and Maitreyabandhu for leading it."

The International FWBO Urban Retreat will run from June 20-27th. If you want to take part, please contact your local FWBO Centre via the retreat website www.theurbanretreat.org, or register for the on-line version via the [FWBO's Facebook page](#).

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2009



Vijayaloka's 'Meditation Marathon' raises \$6,000 AUD

[Vijayaloka](#) is the FWBO's Retreat Centre near Sydney. Members of the Sydney sangha have recently completed their first 'Meditation Marathon' - and raised nearly \$6,000 AUD for Vijayaloka in the process.

They say - "Over the Easter weekend, we held our 'Growth and Contentment' Meditation Marathon to promote the benefits of meditation and raise much-needed funds for the urgent upgrade of the Vijayaloka Buddhist

Retreat Centre near Sydney. The buildings are fairly makeshift (temporary buildings built circa 1940's) and need urgent repairs to be safe enough to meet local council requirements. The Sangha have raised a good part of the money so far, and a great deal of work has already been done, including fireproofing and refurbishing of most of the bedrooms".

Altogether 15 people took part, and one, Aaron Matheson, formerly from the LBC in London, commented -

"Being with the Sangha from Sydney has provided the conditions for me to change in dramatically positive ways. To express my gratitude, I took part in the meditations".

Work at Vijayaloka is still going on, and their fundraising site at www.everydayhero.com.au/meditation_marathon is still open.

In addition, the Vijayaloka retreat centre's transformation received a welcome boost recently with the awarding of nearly \$42,000 from the Australian Government Community Water Grant, as part of their \$2 billion Australian Government Water Fund. The Vijayaloka proposal qualified for support because it is a community orientated initiative that demonstrates public benefit and puts in place practical solutions to help save and protect local water resources.



The photographs show the river at the bottom of the Vijayaloka land, and Chris Hayes MP, the local Federal member, joining the Elements retreat with Chittaprabha (retreat leader) and Viraja (Chairman).

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2009



Wildmind hits a million!

Bodhipaksa, founder of the FWBO's Wildmind meditation teaching website,

reports on Twitter –

"My meditation site, www.wildmind.org had over a million page views last month! Looks like April will be about the same".

FWBO News says, Sadhu Wildmind!

Wildmind has been branching out recently, and now has an active presence on [Facebook](#), (search for Wildmind) [Twitter](http://twitter.com/wildmind) (<http://twitter.com/wildmind>), and, most recently, [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/user/Bodhipaksa) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/Bodhipaksa>).

Of YouTube, Bodhipaksa says "Wildmind has started putting mantras and guided meditations on YouTube as part of an effort to reach more people with what we're doing, and maybe you could do a story about that on FWBO News as well. There's not much up there yet, but we'll be continuing to add more video over the next few weeks".

The YouTube page provides a tantalising glimpse of the more personal tastes of the good folk at Wildmind – of their 19 favourites no less than 17 are 'Peter, Paul, and Mary' songs...

Their latest Newsletter has also just been released, on the theme of "[Celebrating impermanence](#)".

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2009

FWBO Day celebrated in style in Essen



Sanghadarsini sends us this report from Germany-

"Last weekend FWBO friends from Holland, Belgium, France and Germany gathered to celebrate the 42nd FWBO Day, in Essen, Germany. This year's celebration was the best attended ever, which was very much due to Bhante Sangharakshita's visit to the occasion. For each of the last 7 years FWBO friends from the Middle European Region have gathered in either Ghent, Amsterdam or Essen, to celebrate together.

"On Saturday afternoon, we began the programme with a meditation, followed by short talks from the different centres about their new developments. The French read out some of Bhante's poetry which had been translated into French and will soon appear as a book. Jnanacandra talked about the Essen Centre's step to offer all Dharma activities on a Dana basis, a big, but seemingly already very successful step for the Centre. Upekshadaka talked about the new Centre in Ghent, which now occupies a former restaurant - it was a big project for their Sangha to renovate the place and to turn the old kitchen, with all its white tiles which looked more like a slaughter house, into a shrine room. Akasasuri spoke about developments with Metta Vihara, Holland's new retreat centre and Mokshasiddha spoke about the plans for a new town centre in Berlin. Ingrid Menzel told us about the opening of a new FWBO Centre just outside Hamburg, and Abhayada and Tanja Stevanovic talked about Breathworks activities in Germany and their wish to become more of a Right Livelihood Team one day.

"At 5.30 we had an Indian meal, laid on by some of the Essen women. At 7.30 there were three more talks, the theme being "sitting under the Bodhi Tree" - and miraculously, in the Shrine room, a large Bodhi Tree had appeared! Three very different Order Members - Gunabhadri, Suvannavira and Lalitaratna - talked about their quite different Experiences on the Order Convention in Bodhgaya this year. Lalitaratna's very lively talk about the noises in India made us nearly roll over the floor with laughter.

"After that, Vimalavajra beautifully led a three-fold Puja, gathering and focussing all our energies together and bringing the day to a perfect close.

"The next day brought more than 150 people to the Essen Centre. The reason for so many people coming was ... Bhante Sangharakshita. The shrineroom was packed, but quite magically, it didn't feel crowded. When Bhante appeared, the atmosphere became very mindful and light and quiet and after saluting the Shrine together, Bhante gave a talk about the 'The FWBO and the Path of Spiritual Development'

"He talked about integration and the importance of mindfulness, about positivity and the importance of Metta and about spiritual death and the cutting away of our ego through acts of selflessness.

"Without a script and with his sharp clarity and humour, Bhante's talk moved many people.



"The talk has been recorded by Clear Vision and will soon appear on one of the FWBO's websites. After the talk we all went into silence to prepare for a 7-fold Puja done in three languages: Dutch, French and German.

"At about 3 pm, after a lovely lunch, most people made their way back home, to Amsterdam, Ghent, Arnhem, Berlin, Paris, Minden, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Southern Germany. We met in large numbers for the weekend and the effects will be felt for some time to come".

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2009

Vajraloka launches new on-line newsletter



Vajraloka Retreat Centre in Wales is the FWBO's oldest meditation retreat center, founded in 1979.

They've launched a new e-newsletter, which is full of colourful photos, news items, short articles and some poetry. You can sign up to receive a copy by visiting their website at www.vajraloka.com and entering your email address - for a taster, check the [first edition](http://vajraloka.com/docs/vajraloka-newsletter-march-2009.pdf), already on the web at <http://vajraloka.com/docs/vajraloka-newsletter-march-2009.pdf>. Amongst other things, it contains an update on Vajraloka's finances, details of a future retreat, a poem from Claire, which was written on her retreat at Vajraloka last summer, and exotic tales from ex-team member Kieran - now

teaching yoga in Africa!

Balajit, their resident webmaster/ photographer/ journalist, writes "Its hoped that the e-newsletter will develop organically over time, and capture different aspects of life at the retreat centre, with offerings from the resident community and people who visit".



The first issue also launches a Shrineroom appeal. If you would like to contribute, please visit their new and rather minimal fund-raising page at www.justgiving.com/shrineroomappeal.

Balajit spells out why - 'With some spilled contents, frayed edges and fading colours, one by one, our shrineroom gear is falling prey to impermanence! We would like to buy a whole new set of mats, blankets, and cushions. Into the bargain, if possible, we would also like some new shrine cloths and tibetan style puja instruments, to add more colour to our evening rituals. To use the much proclaimed fund raising mantra - 'every little bit helps!'

There's more about Vajraloka on the web - check their photograph albums on Flickr, at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/vajraloka>; their main website at www.vajraloka.org.

A supplementary Newsletter at vajralokanewsletter.googlepages.com contains (among other things) reminiscences on the early days of Vajraloka by [Vajradaka](#) and Kamalashila. Last but not least there's their [Facebook group](#) - search for 'Vajraloka'.

Vajraloka has played a crucial part in the FWBO's ongoing exploration of meditation and Sangharakshita's teaching; you'll find selections of the articles and talks they've produced over the years on Tejananda's (Vajraloka's chairman) personal website at <http://tejanandajohnwakeman.googlepages.com>. Plus there's a wealth of talks by him and others on [FreeBuddhistAudio](#), of course!

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2009

Archive photos from early days of FWBO now online



For the past two years Padmakara, an Order Member from Manchester UK, has been occupying himself in his spare time scanning hundreds and even thousands of historic photographs from the FWBO Archives, held by ClearVision.

Four collections of these have now been uploaded to the FWBO Photos website, covering [people](#), [retreats](#), [communities](#), and [Team-Based Right Livelihoods](#).

We hope a further collection, covering the early days of TBMSG in India, will be added soon. Further contributions are very welcome - please email.

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2009

Jai Bhim International reports...



Jai Bhim International (www.jaibhiminternational.org) is an innovative FWBO project based in San Francisco. “Caste Free Generation” is their slogan: Ann Dennehy, Jai Bhim’s Director, describes their mission as “providing Indian Buddhist youth with the spiritual, educational, and emotional tools to create personal and social change, for a culture freed of caste prejudice and discrimination”.

They’ve had a busy few months, as Ann reports-

“jai bhim friends and family, near and far. i hope this message finds you all well. thanks to all of you for your support, creative support, financial support, moral support, as we launched our non-profit last year. things are going really well.

India trip

i returned from my [third india trip](#) in january, and am planning projects for this year in my new homebase, the bamboo garden here in san francisco. lots of support building here in sf for our work. hosting a monthly happy hour the last friday of every month. and [facebook](#) has been great..

“in india i spent time with our board members kumarjeev, kamalshree and nagarjuna, and re-connected with many of the youth leaders i'd met at the nnby conference last year. i spent time again in central india, in nagpur, where i piloted our teacher training workshops for indian english teachers. i also went north to delhi and to some smaller villages in rajasthan.

community english project

“in the year ahead i will be brainstorming with our indian board members and with indian youth leaders, as well as our american board members and english advisory board, about a [community english project](#), which will be our main focus for 2009. our vision so far is to bring a buddhist-based esl curriculum to smaller dalit communities, and to work intensively with local indian english teachers to lead interactive, communicative student-centered english sessions that will empower language learning in their communities.

“we will be drawing on dr. ambedkar's vision, and on the vision of his mentor at columbia university, john dewey, as well as the revolutionary brazilian educator paulo freire. in addition to creating a curriculum, we are developing a manifesto for the project, so that everyone involved is clear on the project's goals. all this will be posted as updates on our website.

local events

"locally we have been hosting events to bring people together. we are having a monthly happy hour, the last friday of every month. and this summer our board member maw, our artist friends and i will coordinate a bigger local arts event. in january i was asked to make a presentation about my trip to my department at the city college downtown campus. i received a very friendly reception and was asked to present further at other campuses, which we are now coordinating. and connecticut college, my alma mater, has asked me to write an article for the alumni magazine, a beautiful glossy publication that has won several awards.

"also i wanted to tell you about our big project for the fall - jai bhim international is going to declare october as AMBEDKAR MONTH! the two goals of the project are #1 to bring people from the san francisco area into the jai bhim community through fun, and #2 to educate folks here about dr. ambedkar and the dalit buddhist movement. we are coordinating with the san francisco center, and reaching out to other buddhist centers in other traditions, as a way of spreading the word about our movement in india.

"we are scheduling a bunch of events that could lead up to a puja/kirtan on october 14th, which is a wednesday - as you know well, october 14th is the anniversary of the great mass conversion- the official start of the dalit buddhist movement.

"before then, in august and september, we're going to make as many presentations as possible all over the city/bay area, at libraries, bookstores, university and high school classes, other buddhist centers, with the theme of "who is dr. ambedkar?" i imagine plastering the city with simple posters with an image of dr. ambedkar and that line ("who is dr. ambedkar?"), and a link to the jai bhim website. a guerilla campaign! i am coordinating with friends of the public library, my colleagues at city college, and others.

"more prosaically, lots of paperwork to keep up on as we get the non-profit established. board member sarah brown has been helping me do our books and we ended 2008 with a surplus of \$278.15! now we are getting ready to file additional paperwork with the i.r.s. in order for them to approve our 501c3 status. We're still busy fundraising – please visit our page www.jaibhiminternational.org/wealth.

"in closing i'd like to again express my gratitude for sharing the vision for our work. thank you for all your gestures of encouragement and support. jai bhim. love, ann"



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2009

Ordination in Ipswich

On Saturday afternoon 11th April Dee Margerison of the Ipswich (UK) sangha became Acalavajri (long i): she who is the immovable vajra or diamond.

Acalavajri's private preceptor was Srivandana who gave a very moving account of how she had arrived at this name and rejoiced heartily in Acalavajri's many qualities. The ceremony took place in the Ipswich Buddhist Centre and was attended by over 70 people, among them Acalavajri's partner, family and friends.

The public preceptor was Parami.

SADHU!

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2009

Photos from the Order Convention in India

Last month the WBO held its first-ever International Order Convention at Bodh Gaya, in India, site of the Buddha's Enlightenment and centre of the Buddhist world.

Since then a number of photo collections have appeared on the internet and we thought we'd share some with FWBO readers.

Photos from Bodh Gaya and the Order Convention

Vilasamani <http://gallery.me.com/timkp1#100106&view=mosaic&sel=0>
Ashvajit www.flickr.com/photos/ashvajit/sets/72157615477877695/show/
Amitashuri www.new.facebook.com/album.php?aid=100612&id=665478032
Aryapala www.new.facebook.com/album.php?aid=97961&id=526623968
Vajralila www.new.facebook.com/album.php?aid=69860&id=656506568
Gunabhadri www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=72181&id=684713086
Jayarava www.flickr.com/photos/jayarava/sets/72157614890387261/
Taranita (whose photos include a few of the ITBCI school in Kalimpong) www.flickr.com/photos/82395485@N00/sets/

Vidyakaya's photos have been taken one step further, and made into a movie: www.youtube.com/watch?v=exdnjbxRYIM

And finally, from FWBO Photos
www.flickr.com/photos/fwbo/sets/72157594183982192/



MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2009

Naming the 'Three Jewels Centre' in Bodhgaya



Nissoka, a British Order Member who has for many years worked to develop the FWBO/TBMSG's activities in Bodh Gaya, sends us this report -

"Last month was an historic moment in the growth of our movement, and a historic moment for our team working on the project in Bodhgaya. 500 Order Members came together for our first International Convention in India, and it was held on our land in Bodhgaya. This was followed by a Dhammakranti retreat for 300 friends, mitras and order members.

"Bhante, despite his strong love of India, couldn't come physically but he graced the event in style by sending us a video, in the middle of which he revealed his new name for our land and work there. With an impish touch of humour, he recorded the video, and had it sent to the Convention, with strict instructions not to let anyone see it until the day of its launch.

"So it was with great joy and a sense of going into the unknown, we sat inside a big Marquee watching him on a big screen. It's great how technology can bring him to an event without him coming! I definitely felt his presence was there. When he released the name at the end I just felt waves of delight, devotion and love towards him for giving such a simple yet true name.....The Three Jewels Centre!!

"There was not one person in our community who didn't have a big wide eyed smile as we celebrated – it was like we'd won the world cup or something ! !

"At the heart of life at the Three Jewels Centre MUST be a living spiritual community, who live in accordance with and represent our ideals. With a strong community we can connect with others who come here to meet the Buddha.

"The Sangha must live in Bodhgaya. We don't need fancy buildings, which can be just empty symbolic follies, token shrines and market places: we need the real community of Sangha. We need to represent our part of the Buddhist Tradition, helping all visitors and Sangha members to connect with its true significance. Faith arises upon seeing the Buddha, seeing the Buddha in his fullness, and what he taught. You cannot have faith in the Buddha if when you come here you are met by heartless big temples that have no living Communities. It is within the Sangha and the Dhamma that the Buddha comes alive, it is with those communities that his vision is realized and communicated.

"It is our responsibility as Buddhists in the 21st century to take up this flame. To live in Bodhgaya as Sangha. To serve all those who come to Bodhgaya looking for the Buddha. So many people make an effort to come, whether they are beginners who come for the first time, or veteran practitioners with new and deeper questions. We must speak up for the Buddha's vision, like Protectors of the faith. The flame cannot die in our hands. We must

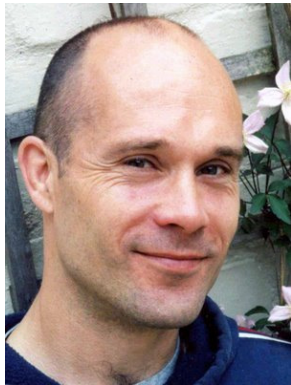
work hard to keep the Buddha's victory alive at Bodhgaya, keep engaged in inward and outward activity.

"All three Jewels must burn bright on our land. Those who visit must meet the Sangha... hear the Dharma... and meet the Buddha. The Three Jewels Symbol and name is statement of our intent. It feels so very appropriate that this simple yet deeply significant symbol blazes at our gate. It is a sign that our land is to become ablaze with all the depth and breadth of our great movement. May all beings be touched by the peace of the great Bo tree."

The Bodh Gaya team have been developing a more detailed vision for the land, and have just launched this together with an appeal for funds. You'll find both at www.justgiving.com/bodhgayaproject .

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2009

FWBO People: Dhivan the poet



Picking up FWBO News' occasional Saturday series on 'FWBO People', today we feature Dhivan, aka Thomas Jones. Dhivan's an Order Member, a poet, an author and critic, a lover of the Pali Canon, and a bird-watcher. He lives in Cambridge UK, and has recently updated his website, www.dhivan.net-a.googlepages.com, where he says -

"What's writing really about? It's about trying to take fuller possession of the reality of your life" – Ted Hughes

"For some time I've wanted a way to make a good selection of my writing and other productions easily available, for the sake of sharing, and the web is a great way to make this possible. I've arranged some of my work in different categories, which you can explore using the links on the right. New to the site is my review of the best Pali Canon anthologies (published in the Western Buddhist Review 5), a talk on 'The Myth of Tristan and Iseult', and information about my first novel 'Green Eros'.

"So please sample, enjoy, and let me know what you think. Here's a sample poem:"

Situation Report - for Padmakara
*The path leads to a vast plain, and then ends,
petering into the expanse of grass.
We are lonely as stars out here. Sometimes
I remember the road through the forest,
its smells and colours and the beating drums,
but I don't wish for that kind of travel,
with its prophecies and wonders.*

You'll also find Dhivan on FWBO People, where he's posted a short biography.

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2009

Coming up soon: three events looking at Buddhism in the cultural life of the West

Mostly FWBO News is about exactly that – news of the FWBO. However the FWBO is but a small part of the much larger wider Buddhist world; and today we bring you news of a few upcoming events from it. They're interesting as all three point to the increasing influence of Buddhism in the cultural life of the West.



Coming up soon is a major exhibition and programme of events at London's V&A Museum. "The Many Faces of Buddhism" is a season of arts and cultural events presented in London by The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation. Starting on Saturday 25 April it will see artists from around the world taking part in an international forum at the V&A. This aims to "Investigate the ways in which contemporary art practice resonates with Buddhist thought", including an exploration of the use of the mind in the process of creation and perception; the role of Buddhism in the modernist impulse to integrate art and life; artists whose work is linked with their own Buddhist practice; artists whose work reflects the themes of Buddhism; and the potential of Buddhist theories for the teaching and presentation of art.

The forum will bring together four distinguished international artists: Lin Hwai Min, choreographer and founder of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre in Taiwan; Meredith Monk, internationally acclaimed composer, singer and choreographer of new opera; Sanford Biggers, multi-media African-American artist who fuses aspects of Buddhism with global pop culture; and Kimsooja, South Korean artist who addresses issues of the displaced self through performance, video and installation.

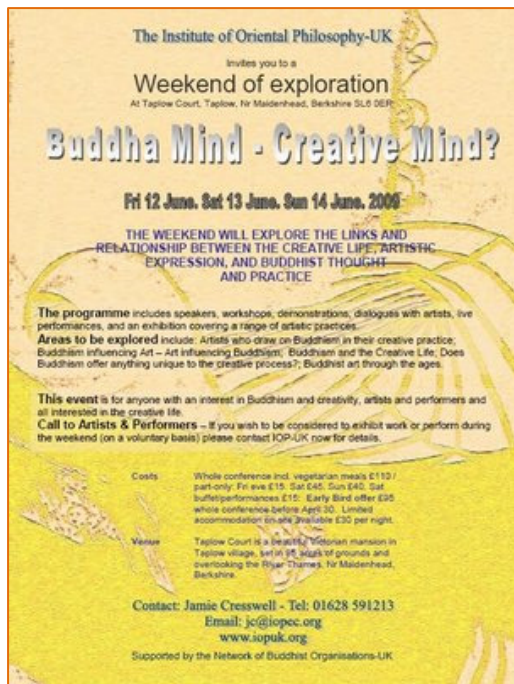
More details at www.vam.ac.uk.



May 7-17 sees the International Buddhist Film Festival (IBFF) festival opening in London. During a ten day run at the Barbican Centre they'll show forty-six films from eighteen nations, including dramatic features, comedies, documentaries and animated works, including twenty-seven UK premieres.

"This is world cinema with a Buddhist touch," said IBFF executive director Gaetano Kazuo Maida. "We reached out to filmmakers and archives on three continents to bring over a wide range of works that reflect the incredible diversity of expression and impact of Buddhist ideas today."

More on this at www.ibff.org.



And last – but by no means least, and following directly on from the above, is a Conference entitled "Buddha Mind-Creative Mind?" organised by the 'Institute of Oriental Philosophy' in conjunction with Britain's 'Network of Buddhist Organisations', of which the FWBO is an active member.

They describe this as a “weekend of exploration” exploring links and relationships between the creative life, artistic expression, and Buddhist thought and practice. The programme includes speakers, workshops, demonstrations, dialogues with artists, live performances, and an exhibition covering a range of artistic practices.

Dates are Friday 12th - Sunday 14th June at Taplow Court, Taplow, nr Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 0ER.

More details and a booking form at <http://buddhamind.terapad.com>

THURSDAY, APRIL 09, 2009

News of Sangharakshita



Sangharakshita, founder of the FWBO, and now well into his 80's, lives in Birmingham UK, in the FWBO's 'Madhyamaloka' community. They've sent FWBO News some highlights of Sangharakshita's diary for the past few months.

Before that though, we bring news of his latest book, just out, and entitled 'Living Ethically: advice from Nagarjuna's Precious Garland'. Windhorse, his publishers, say –

"In a world of increasingly confused ethics, Living Ethically looks back over the centuries for guidance from Nagarjuna, one of the greatest teachers of the Mahayana tradition. Drawing on the themes of Nagarjuna's famous scripture, Precious Garland of Advice for a King, this book explores the relationship between an ethical lifestyle and the development of wisdom. Covering both personal and collective ethics, Sangharakshita considers such enduring themes as pride, power and business, as well as friendship, love and generosity".

Madhyamaloka pick up the story -

"In January, Bhante was filmed being interviewed by Mahamati in honour of the occasion of the Order Convention at Bodh Gaya, and the film was shown for the first time in India on 24 February. Bhante considers the occasion of the first Convention to be held in India to have been a very significant one for the history of the Order.

"The recording of the interview with Bhante that was shown at the convention in Bodhgaya is available for general viewing on [VideoSangha](http://Videosangha.net) at www.videosangha.net/video/Sangharakshita-and-his-Legacy. Copies can be ordered from [ClearVision](http://ClearVision.org) at www.clear-vision.org/videos/interviews.aspx.

"Since then, aside from being kept busy by a steady stream of personal appointments, Bhante has participated in two question-and-answer sessions on events hosted by the [Dharmapala College](http://DharmapalaCollege.org). The last such event was attended by Nityabandhu, who, having left England almost exactly a year ago to set up the FWBO's first Centre in Poland, returned to his old room in Bhante's flat for the duration of his stay.

"Matt, Sangharakshita's secretary, has had the pleasure and privilege of reading to him from David Loy's snappily titled book *Money Sex War Karma*, which looks at various contemporary issues from a Buddhist perspective. Bhante found it very interesting and stimulating, and recommends the book to Order members. You'll find it reviewed by Nagapriya on the WBO's [Western Buddhist Review](http://WesternBuddhistReview.org) website.

"Bhante's health has generally been stable, though he is easily tired, and in January he was forced to leave Bristol, where he had planned to lead a weekend of study, early, due to having slept badly. In February he had the first of a series of injections into his left eye, which, it is hoped, will slow down the macular degeneration, and maybe even improve his vision slightly. He is due another such injection on 25 March, and another a month later.



"Today (13 March at the time of writing) Bhante will be travelling to Cardiff, where he will stay for the weekend. He will be inaugurating a new triptych in the [Cardiff Buddhist Centre](http://CardiffBuddhistCentre.org) shrine-room on the Saturday, and on Sunday he will take a question-and-answer session with Order members and mitras.

"Other forthcoming events include a trip to Essen, his first international travel of the year, for the Central European FWBO Day celebrations.

"He also has two scheduled launches of [The Essential Sangharakshita](http://TheEssentialSangharakshita.org), one at Birmingham Buddhist Centre on 11 April, and another at Cambridge Buddhist Centre on 23 May".

Sangharakshita's website is at www.sangharakshita.org. This has recently been updated and now contains no less than 32 of his books for free download.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 08, 2009

Ordination in Germany

At a Public Ordination Ceremony held on Friday 3rd April at the (very beautiful) Minden Buddhist Centre Charlotte Paulus became Saddhabodhi. Her name, which is in Pali, means „She who is realizing, or awakening, through faith“ or „She whose awakening arises through faith“. Her Private Preceptor was Prasadavati and her Public Preceptor was Dayanandi.

Sadhu!!!

TUESDAY, APRIL 07, 2009

LBC celebrates as building work ends



The FWBO's London Buddhist Centre (LBC) has had the biggest refurbishment in its history – and they're celebrating.

The newly enlarged centre includes Breathing Space, a new health and wellbeing venue, plus a completely rebuilt bookshop/reception area; with improved facilities and disability access throughout.

Week-long celebrations are planned for May, to include a ritual blessing of the new spaces, open days for both Breathing Space and the LBC, an opening party, and a grand re-opening of the LBC itself. There's even a VIP - Lord Layard – coming to

open Breathing Space. Lord Layard is the UK Government's "happiness" tsar and author of the influential 'Depression Report' which advocated a substantial increase in non-chemical treatment for people suffering from stress or depression.

They say “If you feel a connection with the LBC come and have a look round on our Open Day or join us to celebrate Wesak!”

The public programme is currently –

Open Days: LBC and Breathing Space

Free meditation classes, talks on Buddhism. Free introduction to our Mindful Based Approaches (MBSs) to depressions, anxiety and addiction. A chance to introduce friends and family to the atmosphere and the activities of the LBC & Breathing Space. Sat 9 May. 11-5pm. Free of charge.

Celebratory Evening.

An evening to celebrate and rejoice in the people who have made the building project happen; a chance to enjoy the spacious new Centre. With live music and food. Sat 9 May. 7.15pm

Wesak Festival Day

A celebration and exploration of the most significant event in Buddhism: the day the Buddha attained supreme Enlightenment. With meditation, talks and ritual. Subhuti will be giving a Dharma talk as a part of the celebrations, with the title: Meeting the Buddha. Sun 10 May. From 10am. Dana/Donation. Led by Paramabandhu and Maitrivajri.

Grand Opening Party.

Rejoicing in all those who have helped create the new centre with music and film. Mon 11 May. 7.15pm



MONDAY, APRIL 06, 2009

A death in the Order



Maitreyabandhu writes from the London Buddhist Centre:

"I am very sorry to inform you that Mahananda died on Thursday evening April 2nd at 9.20 p.m. in hospital in London. He did not regain consciousness after his stroke the previous evening.

"The funeral will be at the London Buddhist Centre and details will be circulated later. Mahananda was 61 years old and he was ordained in 2002."

Mahananda was an Alexander Technique teacher and accomplished accordion player. He had recently returned from the 'trip of a lifetime' overland from the UK to Thailand via Mongolia and China; the photograph, taken from an album featuring him on Facebook, shows him "proudly exhibiting his likeness to the Great Khan" while in Mongolia.

He will be much missed by his many friends.



SUNDAY, APRIL 05, 2009

Featured website: FWBO People

Today's featured FWBO website is FWBO People – a one-stop-shop displaying the websites of over 150 members of the FWBO and Order.



New to the site is a number of 'profiles' giving short biographical sketches of a number of Order Members, generally in their own words and generally describing their spiritual journeys towards ordination into the Western Buddhist Order.

They are moving and authentic testimonials to the power of the Dharma to change people's lives, and provide glimpses into the many different lifestyles lived by members of the Order.

You'll find FWBO People at www.people.fwbo.org.

THURSDAY, APRIL 02, 2009

Karuna Trust unveils new strategy



The Karuna Trust www.karuna.org is the FWBO's largest fundraising charity, sending well over a million pounds every year to many different social and Dhamma projects in India and elsewhere in South Asia.

Over the past few months Karuna's Trustees and staff have been working, in consultation with their partners, to develop a new five-year strategy.

This was officially unveiled this week, and announced on their website - www.karuna.org

They say -

"As Karuna enters its 30th year, we celebrate our success in supporting the movement of Dalit uplift, especially in Ambedkarite western India, and in preserving precious Buddhist cultures in the Himalayas. In 2008 alone Karuna helped around 375,000 women, men and children to transform their lives.

"Such is the scale and severity of exclusion and poverty in South Asia - over 250 million people are labelled Dalit or Tribal - that we need to radically increase our impact. To this end we need to expand the scope of our work to build a larger alliance of project partners and supporters.

Our distinctive Buddhist emphasis, supporting individual transformation to energise effective social change, can then achieve a peaceful revolution".

The full strategy is available on Karuna's website at www.karuna.org/karuna_strategic_plan_2009_2013.pdf

Some spaces are still available for Karuna's Summer and Autumn appeals – a great way to build fundraising skills, deepen your practice, and raise LOTS of money for good causes. Check their Appeals blog here - www.appeals.karuna.org.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009

News from Germany: FWBO Day in Essen; Düsseldorf celebrates their 2nd birthday



FWBO members from Holland, Belgium, France, Poland and Germany (collectively known as the FWBO's 'Middle European Region') are very happy to announce that they will be celebrating FWBO day this year in Essen, Germany on Saturday 4th April (starting 2 pm) and Sunday 5th April (ending at about 2-3 pm).

Sanghadarsini writes "We are very lucky that Bhante Sangharakshita has agreed to celebrate with us and to give a talk on Sunday at 10.30. If you would also like to come to celebrate FWBO day with us, we are happy to organise accommodation for you.

"For the last 7 years we have been celebrating FWBO day in our Region and have previously met up in Ghent, Amsterdam and Essen. Its great that we have this opportunity to come together and to form strong bonds of friendship. As there are so many languages involved, we still seem to communicate most of the time in English.

"The theme for the weekend will be: "Sitting under the Bodhi Tree". As quite a few of us met up in Bodhgaya a month ago for the International Order Convention, we were so inspired about being there, that we quite naturally decided on the theme.

"Please write to essen@fwbo.de for more details and contact us as soon as possible if you are actually planning to come".

Meanwhile Sraddhabandhu writes from Dusseldorf - "Only two years after the founding of „FWBO Düsseldorf" we welcomed 20 guests to our second birthday party. Admittedly, 20 is not the number of people we have on "open nights" (it varies between five and eight people), but we can see significant progress. If you imagine that we started with about three people attending just two years ago..."



"The scope of events we offer has widened considerably over that time. We now have two beginners nights per week, a study group which will finish "Vision and Transformation" in a

short while, a meditation course will start in April, meditation afternoons every second month, and we want to celebrate Wesak and to take part in the "International Urban Retreat - www.theurbanretreat.org".

"I'm very happy to work with such a committed team. With metta to all, Sraddhabandhu".

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2009

News from the Network of Buddhist Organisations



The Network of Buddhist Organisations, <http://nbo.org.uk>, or NBO, is the UK's principle forum for Buddhists of all schools to meet and collaborate. Last weekend saw them launch two important new initiatives at their AGM: a 'helpline' for those who have, in the words of the NBO, "Bumped into Buddhism and come away Bruised" and, for the first time, a Code of Conduct.

In addition the afternoon session was devoted to exploring the topic of Young People and the Dharma, with an informative presentation by Venerable Amaranatho and Sister Cittapala from Amaravati; this was followed by discussion. Amaravati have a website with many useful resources at www.family.amaravati.org, of especial interest may be their Child Protection Policy at www.family.amaravati.org/cp/main.

The NBO's new Code of Conduct asks members to promote their aims, which are:

- a) To promote fellowship and dialogue between Buddhist Organisations.*
- b) To facilitate cooperation in matters of common interest.*
- c) To work in harmony with Buddhist and other like-minded organisations throughout the world.*

Furthermore it says *"In order to maintain harmony and promote Buddhist teachings in the UK, as a Buddhist organisation and member of the NBO we undertake the following:*

- a) To observe the ethical standards as exemplified by the Five Precepts in all our activities.*
- b) To undertake that our members will not defame or attack each others organisations or teachers in public or through the media.*
- c) If disagreements arise between NBO organizations or with other organizations or groups, every attempt will be made to resolve them through internal processes or through private discussion and mediation.*

A fuller Code is under discussion and may be introduced during 2009.

Of the new helpline they say -

"From time to time people have bad experiences in the context of their exploration of the Buddhist path. Sometimes this is as a result of mistakes and misunderstanding on the part of

one or both parties involved. More rarely, some organisations or some teaching relationships have become dysfunctional for a variety of different reasons. Either way, individual Buddhist practitioners may have been profoundly upset and disturbed. The UK's Network of Buddhist Organisations <http://nbo.org.uk/home.htm> first came together to discuss the idea that the wider Buddhist community should offer a compassionate response to the distress that is evident in these situations.

"Over a period of time it has become clear that the NBO does not have the resources to establish a comprehensive counselling service for people who are experiencing this type of distress. Neither does the NBO have any role to play as policeman to the Buddhist community. However, over the years the NBO has built up a useful range of contacts, a certain amount of background knowledge concerning Buddhist groups in the UK, and counts among its members experienced practitioners of Buddhism who have some understanding of the issues that can arise. The Network would like to make a small start towards offering useful help in appropriate circumstances.

"Those who feel that they would like to discuss a problem of this nature are invited to speak to the Secretary who will be happy to provide a listening ear and may be able to offer constructive suggestions. The current Secretary is a qualified general medical doctor who practices Buddhism in the Chan tradition. If you would like to contact her, please send an e-mail to secretary@nbo.org.uk and a phone call can then be arranged. Please note that as she does this work for the NBO on a part-time basis, e-mails are not checked every day".

SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2009

On tour in Sri Lanka



Following yesterday's report from Thailand, Ujukarin has sent us this from his recent travels in Sri Lanka. The FWBO has a small centre in Sri Lanka run by Saddhavira, with Ujukarin joining him twice a year for retreats and classes. It's an instructive tale of the difficulties of introducing a new way of doing things into a traditional Buddhist culture... He writes –

"Wow! Another Lanka Dharmaduta tour finished, two weeks by Saddhavira and Ujukarin. And it's getting curiouiser and curiouiser, as we enter the Wonderland of countryside viharas...

"How many of you have experienced a Buddhafield retreat in the English summer mud? Or participated in a Dharma Talk, including some 'quite specifically conditioned' interested grandmothers? Or seen a version of the 'top-or-flop' TV show, where the audience votes to keep or dismiss the artist? NOW... imagine a combination of all of these...!

“A main activity during our tour was a 3-day rural vihara retreat at Polpitigama town in Kurunegala district. It’s a typical countryside vihara on the outskirts of town, with the usual more or less conservative lay audience – and premises that don’t stand the monsoon showers very well. Our party included Saddhavira and 5 mitras/regulars, and the special dimension was that the retreat was around a full-moon day. So we were scheduled to give 3 talks and meditation sessions to the temple audience, numbering around 60-70, including many of the proverbial ‘grandmothers leading a sila life to prepare for their afterlife’ (and wanting reaffirmation of their pious quiet life, not virya or other ‘dangerous’ Dharma elements...).

“The morning talk (on personal mandalas) was loved by our group and by quite a few attending families and some grannies, but not all. Around lunch a group of them visited the senior bhikshu, and behaved like the audience of the ‘top-or-flop’ TV show: “OUT with these artists” (they’re far too dynamic for us...) was what they said. First we were told that the Bhikshus had bowed to their demands, and we’d have to shut up and retreat to our kutis for a mini-retreat for the rest of the day. But one hour later, shortly before the next talk slot, the Bhikshus told us that ‘well we had been invited for the full day and as good hosts they’d stick to that invitation and allow two more talk sessions – any way we wanted it’.

“The afternoon talk was on devas, sraddha and white magic, and was accompanied by heavy showers and lightning – by chance or not :-). And the evening session was experienced by everyone as amazing and inspired because we dived into ‘bringing Dharma to your heart’. So I am glad that we survived the top-or-flop vote, and we definitely felt that we had a new ‘Wonderland’ experience in the twilight zone between Western and Cultural/Ethnic Buddhism. And probably most of the regulars attending and maybe even some locals will find inspiration in this fullmoon day for following up with us!

“Other highlights included a talk in another rural area (Kekirawa near Anuradhapura) by Ujukarin together with a bhikshu who had attended our earlier retreat. At the end some of the audience, teenage girls working as Buddhist Sunday school teachers, asked Ujukarin for magic threads around their waists blessed with mantras – for a number of reasons, including his own Srilankan family life ;-), he backed down. And we had a well-attended day retreat in Colombo, and a weekend retreat at the Sagaraloka centre which was also attended well but NOT by exactly the (at least two) men who had asked to become mitras and could have become so during that retreat. So those ceremonies will have to wait till the fall...

“And in the sidelines we also had organisational progress. A 3-month Dharmaduta visit of an Indian Order Member (Pradnyajeet) is now sure to happen within a year. And we hope that some of the men GFR mitras will start attending the Nagpur ordination courses in India. So all-in-all it was a much more positive picture than last year: our sangha-building investments are starting to pay off!”

You can see more photos from their trip on their [Facebook album](#).

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2009

The East West Sanctuary goes East



Sinhagupta, an Order Member based in Cambridge UK has for some years also been engaged in setting up the East-West Sanctuary in Hungary, a “Center of contemplative inquiry and healing”. She’s recently returned from a four-week visit to Thailand and sends this report to FWBO News

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“I am writing this towards the end of a 4-week period in Thailand. I was fortunate enough to make it here on the last plane, diverted to a military airport. Many, many hours

later, after a 9-hour trek through Thailand, I arrived at Ubon Ratachani University, where I have been invited to teach on an undergraduate course on Buddhist Business Administration.

“This has been quite an experience, including running a 2-day retreat for 45 students , on the campus. Mostly, my brief has been to teach basic Buddhism to Thai students, and to find a way of helping the students understand the importance of this to business . Which is a strange request in a country where 30% of the economy runs under ‘sufficiency economy’ principles, as developed by the Thai king, following the work of Schumacher.

“Whilst this is 90% Buddhist country, there is still a distinct lay/monastic divide, so the understanding of Buddhism here is different . The practices and principles of the FWBO have been extremely useful, as has my own work at the East West Sanctuary, where I have been introducing basic concepts and psychotherapeutic skills into the community.

“A further interesting element here is the Asoke community, of which there is one on campus. This works on Buddhist sufficiency economy principles, and throughout Thailand there are several, each with about 5-6000 people. Generally, this is a ‘movement’ which is considered ‘heretic’ from the point of view of traditional Thai Buddhism, but it is supported by many Thai people, both in spirit and financially. I received such a warm welcome, and am sure that I will be coming back. It is a privilege to see such wonderful work being carried out, and to make Buddhist connections in these different ways.

“Part of the work I am developing at the EWS is that of creating sustainable community, as in these times especially it feels very important that spiritual traditions are built back into our places of work. I am engaged, here and at my university, in developing and promoting Buddhist economics, and communicating its importance in the current crisis. Unfortunately, the conference I was also attending was postponed until April because of the unrest in Bangkok, and the international visitors could not make it here.

“At the end of this week, I shall be running a further workshop in a monastery near Bangkok, but this will be on psychotherapeutic methods. I understand there are already 50 people attending – from the monastic community, from those wishing to introduce Buddhist methods into their daily lives, and from a group of people studying Buddhist psychology”.

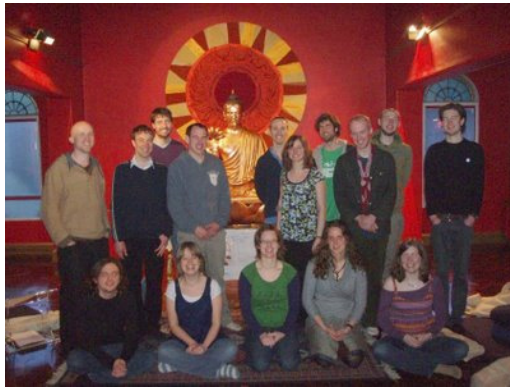
Dharmacharini Sinhagupta in Thailand.

You can find more about the work of the East-West Centre on its website www.eastwestsanctuary.com

Tomorrow we publish an account of another FWBO pioneer: Ujukarin's adventures in Sri Lanka.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2009

Young Buddhists meet in Birmingham; more gatherings planned



Kev from the FWBO's Birmingham Buddhist Centre sends us this report:

"We recently hosted a 'Day for Young Buddhists' in Birmingham. And what a fantastic day it was - people travelled from as far as Norwich and Leeds for what turned out to be a vibrant and inspiring gathering.

"The day began with a dedication ceremony and meditation, followed by four short talks by young people in the Sangha on the subject of 'What inspires me'. From this simple brief came four very rousing and inspiring talks.

"The afternoon was left as open space for people to explore what was of particular interest to them at the time; this included discussion groups, 5 rhythms dancing, and drumming in the garden. This was all rounded off with a Bodhicaryavatara Puja to finish. A great day, and we've another event for young Buddhists on the cards for the summer".

To help people contact one another, there's a Facebook group "[Young People in the FWBO](#)"; this now includes a Calendar of events especially recommended for young Buddhists. It currently has 109 members from all over the world.

Next up is a similar day event for young people in Brighton, scheduled for 26 April.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2009

New videos of Sangharakshita available online



Last month we published a recording of an interview with Sangharakshita, recorded in Birmingham but screened at the International Order Convention in Bodhgaya. This had to be temporarily withdrawn due to overload on the host site; we are pleased to announce that it is again available for general viewing. This time it is on VideoSangha, the FWBO's video-sharing website.

The link is -

www.videosangha.net/video/Sangharakshita-and-his-Legacy

If you want to order a copy from Clear Vision you can do so at

www.clear-vision.org/videos/interviews.aspx

The following links may also be of interest

Bhante talking about Bodhgaya:

www.videosangha.net/video/Sangharakshita-on-Bodhgaya

Bhante's talk on some of the Teachers on the FWBO Refuge Tree -

Jan 09: www.videosangha.net/video/Sangharakshita-on-the-Refuge-Tr

Bhante's unveiling of the new LBC shrine:

www.videosangha.net/video/Unveiling-the-new-LBC-shrine

Bhante's conversation with Maitreyabandhu in November 08:

www.videosangha.net/video/Sangharakshita-in-conversation

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009



New Centre opening in Ghent, Belgium

Upekshadaka, an Order Member from the FWBO's centre in Ghent, Belgium has written to say -

"On March 21st the Ghent Buddhist Centre is officially opening its new centre.

At the beginning of last year it became clear that we had to move out of the old centre because it was getting too small (well, there were just more and more people coming - the centre was just as big as it always had been!) We found a new place to rent close to the old one and in November 2008 started renovating it.

"Six months of hard work by our sangha have transformed what used to be a greasy old restaurant into a nearly finished wonderful new Buddhist Centre. have a look at the pictures and judge for yourselves!

"On Saturday March 21st we're celebrating the hard work and the hard workers and the big change this involves for the Ghent sangha. Everyone is invited to join us in this celebration. This is the programme:

11.00 - opening ceremony & meditation

14.00 - 17.00 - everyone is welcome for a visit and some tea and cake (which will be abundantly present, as is the habit for flemish people).

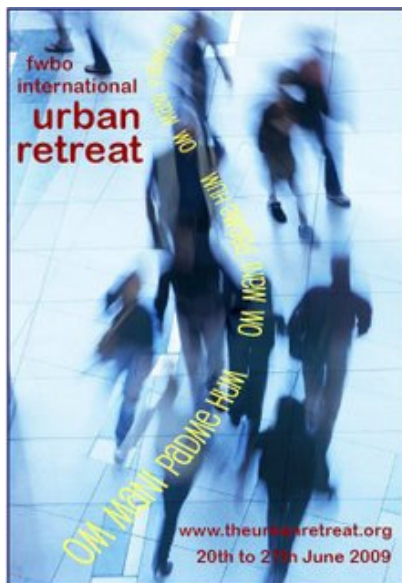
"Our new address is: Oudescheldestraat 14, Gent, Belgium (www.gent.vwbo.net)

"Hope to see you there on the 21st or some other time!"



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 02, 2009

FWBO International Urban Retreat: plans take shape



Plans are taking shape for a major new FWBO event: the Movement's first 'International Urban Retreat'.

Vajragupta, who works for the FWBO's Development Team, says -

"This year we are running the first ever FWBO International Urban Retreat. All over the world, local FWBO Centres will run 'urban retreats', all during the same week in June.

"On an 'urban retreat' you carry on living and working in your normal circumstances, but with a difference...

"The week starts with a day retreat at your local FWBO Centre – this will be on Saturday 20th June. During that day you'll be helped and encouraged to set up the conditions to take your practice deeper. To support you during the week, there will be talks, led meditations, and other resources available, both locally and on-line.

"The urban retreat ends with another day event at your Centre on 27th June – this will include the opportunity to reflect on how it went, and where you want to take your practice next...

It's simple enough but the benefits are many –

- * you can gain confidence in your practice... the urban retreat shows you how you can create positive states of mind in the midst of everyday life.
- * you can go deeper... link-up with other people at your Centre and help each other to practice more intensively for a week.
- * you can be inspired... you'll be part of an international event, practising with people from FWBO Centres all over the world.

"For those who can't attend an urban retreat at a FWBO Centre, there is the chance to do the retreat on-line - for details check the website www.theurbanretreat.org (coming soon) or via the FWBO Page on Facebook.

"As part of the retreat we'll be collaborating with various FWBO projects – Wildmind, Free Buddhist Audio, Videosangha, and hopefully Breathworks. Watch this space - we'll be posting more details over the coming weeks".

FWBO Address List - major update published



The FWBO's main address list has recently benefitted from a major overhaul, and as a consequence many FWBO groups have been listed there for the first time.

The new list is available on the main fwbo website at www.fwbo.org/contacts/addresses.html.

In addition an 'in-house' version has been prepared for use by those running FWBO Centres or groups – please contact FWBO News if you are interested in a copy of this.

One delightful discovery was that there are no less than 57 residential FWBO communities still in existence, spread across nine countries. It's certainly true that a much smaller proportion of the FWBO now live in communities compared with ten or fifteen years ago, but community living is clearly alive and well in the FWBO Sangha.

It also became apparent that since the list was last revised, new FWBO groups have sprung up in a substantial number of new places, especially around the UK but including such out-of-the-way places as the West of Ireland, where there are three groups - all run single-handedly by Sinhaketu!


In addition, some at least of the many TBMSG Centres in India have been added, in a lot of cases for the first time.

Any corrections to the list are welcome, please contact FWBO News at any time. Any readers interested to start an FWBO group where they live are also invited to get in touch.

In this month's edition of FWBO News:

Creativity conference coming up; Buddhafield seeks volunteers; new centre in Belgium; UK Buddhist 'Safety Net' launched; stories from Hungary, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, Germany; and India. FWBO photo archives, Youth events, Urban Retreat and more.

volunteer with
buddhafield cafe it takes all shapes and sizes



Buddhafield is a creative meeting point between the urgent environmental concerns of today & the timeless relevance of Buddhist teachings. The Buddhafield collective runs a tight Livelihood cafe, camping retreats, an annual festival & owns land for holding the retreats, creating sacred spaces and developing permaculture sites.

The Buddhafield cafe runs on a potent mix of commitment, generosity, hardwork, passion, practical Dharma (a recycled Buddhist) whilst bringing a sense of openness, possibility & community to a diverse range of people. It exists on an edge between traditional Buddhist values, and the hedonistic, festival culture, treading a path along which can become a rewarding spiritual practice.

The cafe aims to tread lightly on the earth by reducing and recycling as much of its waste as possible, and producing food that is locally sourced, organic, fairly traded & vegan. Volunteering in the cafe provides real and meaningful opportunities to make all of your life - your practice. The focus also says that working in the cafe is about: 'friendship, family, play, cooking good food and experiencing magic'.

Volunteer for these festivals
arriving a day before and after if possible
Spring 28 - 31 May
Buddhafield 11 - 19 July
Big Green 28 - 3 August
Weekends 11 - 13 September
to be confirmed
Christmas 11 - 13 August
Day of the Deities 15 - 18 September
Contact: vol@buddhafield.org
www.buddhafield.org

The Institute of Oriental Philosophy-UK
invites you to a
Weekend of exploration
At Taplow Court, Taplow, Nr Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 6EP

Buddha Mind - Creative Mind?

Fri 12 June, Sat 13 June, Sun 14 June, 2008

THE WEEKEND WILL EXPLORE THE LINKS AND
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CREATIVE LIFE, ARTISTIC
EXPRESSION, AND BUDDHIST THOUGHT
AND PRACTICE

The programme includes speakers, workshops, demonstrations, dialogues with artists, live performances, and an exhibition covering a range of artistic practices.

Areas to be explored include: Artists who draw on Buddhism in their creative practice; Buddhism influencing Art - Art influencing Buddhism; Buddhism and the Creative Life; Does Buddhism offer anything unique to the creative process?; Buddhist art through the ages.

This event is for anyone with an interest in Buddhism and creativity, artists and performers and all interested in the creative life.
Call to Artists & Performers - If you wish to be considered to exhibit work or perform during the weekend (on a voluntary basis) please contact IOP-UK now for details.

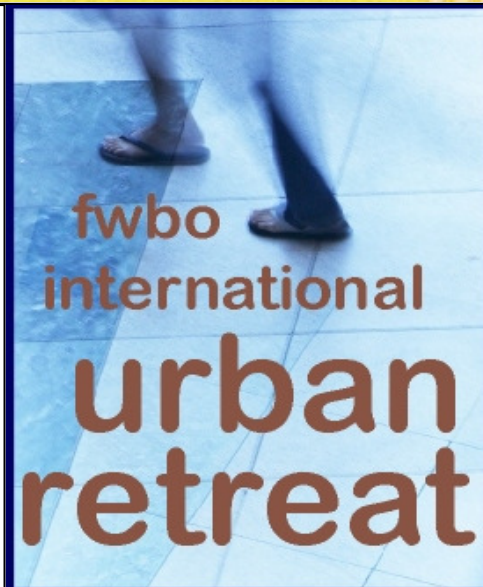
Costs	Whole conference incl. vegetarian meals €110 / part-only: Fri eve £15, Sat £45, Sun £40. Sat buffet/performance £15. Early Bird offer £95 whole conference before April 30. Limited accommodation (single/double) £30 per night.
Venue	Taplow Court is a beautiful Victorian mansion in Taplow village, set in 95 acres of grounds and overlooking the River Thames, Nr Maidenhead, Berkshire.
Contact:	Jamie Cresswell - Tel: 01628 591213 Email: jc@iopuc.org www.iopuc.org
Supported by the Network of Buddhist Organisations-UK	

Date for your diary: FWBO International Urban Retreat

June 2009 will see the FWBO's first ever
International Urban retreat.

These have been pioneered at a few FWBO centres
over the past few years, and have proven both
popular and effective.

The dates are **20-27th June 2009.**



fwbo
international
urban
retreat