



FWBO and TBMSG News: Collected stories October-November 2008

on the web at:

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



Inside this month:

the Five Female
Buddhas:
a 'terma'
from
Vessantara
(and much more)



FWBO News presents a 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 Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha in India.

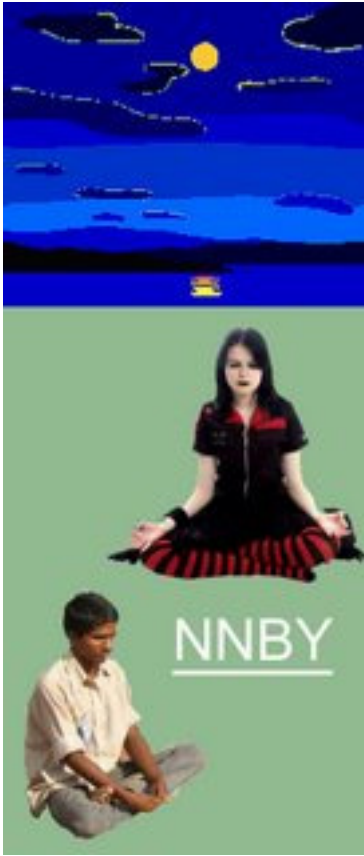
This month we have stories from India, Holland, UK, USA, Poland, Ireland, Germany, Spain, and Mauritania. Enjoy...

Sangharakshita's news

Sangharakshita has been very active in recent months, visiting centres both here and abroad, seeing individuals nearly every day, continuing working on 'Precious Garland Seminar' with Samacitta and taking regular study with a small local men's chapter...

more inside

Seeking sponsors for international Full-Moon meditation



The night of Saturday December 13th will see an international 'Sponsored Full Moon meditation' raising funds for NNBY, India's National Network of Buddhist Youth, an autonomous project under TBMSG's 'umbrella'.

The target is for them to raise their entire annual budget of UK £4,500 in a single night - all readers of FWBO News are invited to contribute, either by meditating (and seeking sponsors for yourself!) or simply by donating.

This is very simple – there is an internet fundraising page at www.justgiving.com/fullmoonmeditation.

Kumarajiv from India has contacted FWBO News with the latest developments there. He says -

"I am writing about the arrangements in India for the Sponsored Full Moon meditation. As you know this is to raise funds world-wide for NNBY- this is our initiative of the National Network of Buddhist Youth. We need funds for our programme of Buddhist Youth leadership training and also for our big annual Buddhist Youth Conference.

"The event in Nagpur will be the biggest. We are arranging a facility for meditation for 500 people. It will be held at the open to sky meditation hall on the Deekshabhoomi ground. This is the historic place where Dr. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism in 1956. Subhuti will be giving a one

hour talk at the beginning of it at 6 to 7.30 pm then he will ring the bells for the first meditation at 8 pm. We will go on until 5.30 am and then conclude with puja.

"The arrangements for 500 people will be little risky since we are fearing that many more people would turn up. We will also be encouraging participants to donate during the event.

"People in Wardha will be meditating at the TBMSG Centre there, they are hoping for 100 participants – and the same at our Centre in Amaravati. Others are also meditating throughout the world. We warmly invite all members of our Sangha to join us on this night and also to donate to NNBY."

The initiative has met an enthusiastic response in New York among the FWBO Sangha there, they have created a special webpage that can accept [American donations](#). It's also been spreading virally through the [Facebook network](#) where people from 7 countries have committed to participate.

It's very easy to take part – you simply commit to meditating for as long as you feel able on the full-moon night of Saturday December 13th, this can be in your own home or any other place of your choosing. Then tell your friends, asking them to sponsor you by visiting the fundraising webpage www.justgiving.com/fullmoonmeditation. And if you don't feel up to meditating – just donate!

A full [introduction to NNBY](#) is available on their main fundraising page; they also have a [website](#). Please do consider taking part or donating.

Sunday, November 23, 2008

FWBO Websites II: Visible Mantra



Welcome to Part II of our series showcasing websites created by members of the FWBO or Western Buddhist Order. Please [email us](#) if you would like to suggest a site for inclusion.

[Visible Mantra](#) is a remarkable resource created by Jayarava, an Order Member based in Cambridge, UK. Starting with the shapes of simple [seed syllables](#), or bijas, it progresses to beautifully-calligraphed representations of over 40 of the best-known [Buddhist mantras and chants](#) - Avalokitesvara, Tara, Prajnaparamita, as well as lesser-known ones such as the Five Female Buddhas Ākāśadhātuvīśvarī, Locanā, Māmakī, Paṇḍaravāsini, and Tārā.

Jayarava has been interested in mantras for many years, and says of them, “We often ask what does a mantra mean, but a better question is what does it do? A Buddhist mantra evokes and invokes qualities of the Awakened Mind. Mantras bring us into relationship with Enlightenment, and are a vehicle by which our consciousness can awaken to the way things really are. They are rooted in age-old traditions emphasising the interconnectedness of all things. For Buddhists a mantra may also be an expression of devotion towards, or faith in, the Three Jewels.

“As writing encapsulates sounds, so a written mantra captures something of the symbolism of the mantric sound. Visible Mantra presents calligraphy of the seed syllables or bījas and mantras used in the most common Buddhist visualisation and devotional practices performed in the Western Buddhist Order. Additional mantras from the Shingon School and Tibetan lineages are included. The main script used on Visible Mantra is Siddham, but it also features Tibetan, and Lantsa/Ranjana examples”.

Besides the mantra's and seed-syllables, there's sections on [pronunciation](#), [instructions for writing](#) many of the syllables, and a number of thoughtful essays on one or another aspect of mantra. A wide range of more experimental work can be seen on Jayarava's associated [Flickr site](#), and finally, through a clever piece of internet wizardry, there's the not-to-be-missed [Visible Mantra "Shirt City" shop](#), which allows you to design a range of clothing and gifts, such as cups and mouse-mats, with a selection of original Visible Mantra designs.

Enjoy...

Next week we'll feature the Buddhist Images website – Order Member Dhiramati's very beautiful and comprehensive online shop for Buddhist images, thankhas; and all associated items.

Friday, November 21, 2008



Date for your diary: FWBO International Urban Retreat 2009

June 2009 will see the first ever International Urban retreat run by the FWBO. Urban retreats have been pioneered at a few FWBO centres over the past few years, and have proven both popular and effective.

The dates – set after consultation with FWBO Centres worldwide - are **20-27th June 2009.**

All readers of FWBO News world-wide are welcome to take part, whether or not they are near an FWBO Centre.

The plan is for individual FWBO Centres across the world to run their own retreats ‘in parallel’ with one another, with some shared teaching from leading FWBO teachers, plus special arrangements for all those not living near Buddhist centres. We hope this will offer the best possible combination of local flexibility and international solidarity.

Typically an Urban Retreat starts with a day spent on retreat, if possible at the local Buddhist centre. During this, participants are encouraged to think about how they’d like to practice over the coming week – unlike ordinary retreats however, for the retreat itself they are not required to leave their normal homes or work. This means the urban retreat takes place within people’s everyday lives and it’s therefore a great way to bring Buddhist ideals more effectively into one’s daily life – whatever one’s daily life consists in.

Preparation on the day retreat will include things like becoming aware of what may help and what may hinder one’s practice, beginning to keep a ‘practice diary’ for the duration of the retreat, agreeing to ‘buddy up’ with someone to exchange notes on how things are going; and perhaps making arrangements to come to daily morning and evening meditations at the Buddhist Centre - and so on. Another important element is performing an “aspirational puja”, which includes chanting a mantra that can then be used through the week. At the end of the week there is another day retreat to review and learn for the future.

If you’re interested to take part, we suggest three things – put the date in your diary now (June 20-27th 2009); talk to your local Buddhist Centre if you have one to see if they will be taking part, and if not, keep an eye on [FWBO News](#) and also the [FWBO Facebook page](#) where more information – and contact details - will be posted nearer the time.



Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Sangharakshita interviewed in Holland

Following his trip to Holland in April, Sangharakshita has had an interview published in the Dutch Buddhist magazine ‘[Vorm en Leegte](#)’, part of an issue of the magazine devoted to mindfulness.

The interview is available (in Dutch) on the Features section of FWBO News

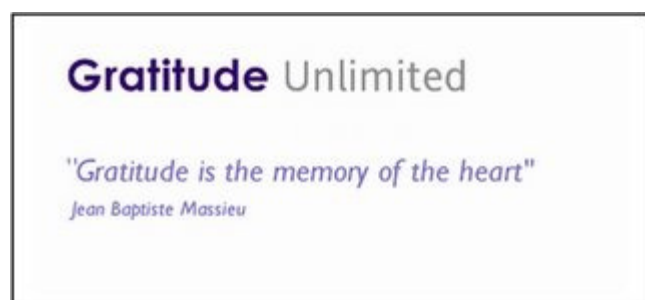
here; it was conducted by Dorine Esser, a mitra from Antwerp, in Belgium.

Non-Dutch speaking readers may still enjoy the very beautiful photographs that accompany the article, taken specially for the article by Belgian photographer Diego Franssens.

A translation is being prepared and will be added to FWBO Features once it is available.

Sunday, November 16, 2008

FWBO websites 1: Gratitude Unlimited



This is the first of a series of occasional articles which will be looking at websites - many less well-known than they should be - created by members of the Western Buddhist Order or FWBO. All have come out of that person's practice, or out of some aspect of their connection to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha -

Gratitude Unlimited

(<http://www.gratitudeunlimited.com>) was created

some five years ago by David Waterston (a mitra from the FWBO's London Buddhist Centre) and Lokabandhu, with Dridhamati as their technical wizard. David had the idea after creating a 'Gratitude Book' for his father's retirement. - it was a lot of work and he thought - why not do it on the internet? The story as he himself tells it goes like this -

The Short Story of GU

"In 2003, Lokabandhu and I were traveling with a little band of brothers called 'buddhafield/Q' around Britain's festival circuit getting up to all sorts of antics (mostly teaching meditation - but all that is another Story).

"At that time I was collating a present for my father. He was retiring as a headmaster and I thought I would contact as many of his old pupils as possible using FriendsReunited and ask them to contribute to an album of gratitude and recollections and photos. I got an unexpectedly good response - about 50 or so. What struck me was that people clearly enjoyed writing and recollecting and having the opportunity to express their thanks. Naturally my father enjoyed reading the album as well.

"I had the idea that it might be possible to devise a website which give people the opportunity to express their gratitude. Almost everyone has someone they would like to thank. What is missing is not the desire to thank, but the means, the opportunity, or they don't know where the person lives, or maybe they need some encouragement. All of these obstacles can be overcome by an online facility.

"Lokabandhu and I chatted the idea through as we toured around the stone circles of Devon and Cornwall and came up somehow with the idea of Gratitude Unlimited. The concept was to provide a facility which had the potential for creating online the sort of 'album' that I painstakingly glued together for my father..."

And so Gratitude Unlimited was born. Of course it also hopes to celebrate Gratitude in general - one of the great Buddhist virtues. Sangharakshita has spoken about gratitude in his talk "Looking at the Bodhi Tree": he links gratitude to the Pali word 'Katannuta', which translates as 'Knowledge of benefits received'.

The site itself is divided into categories, including [Authors](#), [Colleagues](#), [Friends](#), [Good Samaritans](#), [Heroes](#), [In Memoriam](#), [Parents](#), [Partners](#), [Siblings](#), [Spiritual teachers](#), [Teachers](#) – and of course the ever-present ‘other’. Which, FWBO News couldn’t help noticing, includes expressions of gratitude to “[A Taxi Driver](#)” and “[Mother Earth](#)”!

David ends by saying - “In particular you might like to use this site to thank someone with whom you are no longer in contact or whom you never knew personally. Who knows, one day they may come across this site and find your expression of gratitude”.

Enjoy! The site is of course open for new expressions of gratitude.

And by the way, it also comes in a [French version](#)...

Next Sunday we’ll feature ‘Visible Mantra’, a rich and wonderful resource for visualising and calligraphy of Buddhist mantras and seed syllables.



Saturday, November 15, 2008

On the Road in America - Rijumati's travels part VIII

Rijumati has published the 8th instalment of his travels around the world. Over the course of 2008 he has been - almost entirely overland - to Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Japan, Canada, and now the USA.

This instalment covers a road trip across part of the USA, including the Redwoods, Yosemite, and Las Vegas.

They are posted on FWBO Features - click to enjoy...

[Rijumati's Travels, part VIII: On the Road in America](http://www.fwbo-news.org/features/Rijumati_travels_VIII_america.pdf) http://www.fwbo-news.org/features/Rijumati_travels_VIII_america.pdf

A flyer for a 'Working Retreat in Sunny Spain'. The text is in English and Spanish. It mentions the location as Anitavati, Casa Rosa, Andorra, España. The dates are 9th - 16th December 2008. It describes the retreat as a home and rural retreat center. It lists activities like meditation, painting, gardening, and light building work. It also mentions a wonderful view over the valley and comfortable sleeping accommodation. The cost is 270 euros for the week. It includes contact information for Tel: 0034 962134428, Fax: 0034 962134428, and email: andorra2008@goingonretreat.com. It also mentions a website: www.amekavati.com.

Friday, November 14, 2008

Retreats in Spain...

The FWBO operates many retreat centres around the world; with some eight in the UK alone (see www.goingonretreat.com for details).

There's also four FWBO retreat centres in Spain – Guhyaloka (the Secret Realm) and Akasavana (the 'Forest Retreat of Luminous Space') being the two

best-known, focussing on long ordination retreats for men and women respectively.

Less well known is Amitavati, a small retreat centre near Valencia, run by two Order Members Suratna and Vidyasri. They're having a **Working Retreat** in December and are inviting anyone interested to join them.

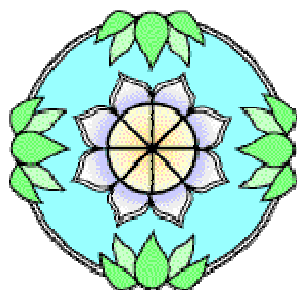
The fourth, and newest, is **Eco-Dharma**, <http://www.ecodharma.com/> . High in a remote part of the Catalan Pyrenees and home to three Order Members - Guhyapati, Kamalashila, and Yashobodhi; EcoDharma aims to offer courses, events and retreats which "support the realisation of our human potential and the development of an ecological consciousness honouring our mutual belonging within the web of life – drawing on the Buddhist Dharma and the emerging ecological paradigms of our time". They too have some **events coming up** – and everything they host is on a 'dana' basis (Dana = Generosity, or the principle of 'give what you can')

Early next year Guhyaloka have their annual month-long working retreat for men, you can find details **here**...

PS - we've been asked to mention a FIFTH retreat center in Spain, this is **SOLTERRENO** (<http://www.solterreno.com/home.htm>), a small retreat centre run by Order Member Bodhin and his partner. It's situated between Guhyaloka and Valencia, and among other things has a lovely solitary retreat cabin. With the new shrine room it can accomodate small retreats of up to 8 to 12 people. Bodhin says, "Have a look at the **photos** – on the website!"

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Calling Buddhist women in the UK...



Sakyadhita (<http://www.sakyadhita.org/>), the name of the International Association of Buddhist Women, means "Daughters of the Buddha." The objectives of Sakyadhita include:

To create a network of communications for Buddhist women throughout the world

To provide improved facilities for women to study and practice the teachings

Beatrice Gassner, who represents Sakyadhita UK at the UK's **Network of Buddhist Organizations** (NBO, <http://nbo.org.uk/>), is researching the current state of women Buddhists in the UK. She has devised a questionnaire, which women Buddhists practicing in the UK are invited to complete and return. If you would like to reply, please do so direct to her at sakyadhita-uk@gmx.net.

"Yasodhara – Buddhist Women in the UK" – Questionnaire

She says - Please only write what you are happy with, to be used in the article. I may quote you or just summaries – please use only the name/initial which I may use. Thank you.

Name:

Age:

Nationality:

Family/Children:

Buddhist since:

Tradition/Lineage:

Previous Religion/Spiritual Practice:

Ordained – do you live in a Centre, Nunnery/Monastery, or on your own – do you have to work: Lay – Occupation:

Why Buddhism?

Can you say something about your Practice?

What supports you in your Training?

What helps you to keep your Commitments/Vows?

Do you go on Retreats?

How does your Practice work in your daily life?

What inspires you?

Anything else you would like to say about being a Buddhist Woman in the UK:

Thank you very much, and I will send you a copy of the article .

May this be for the benefit of all living beings.

Beatrice Jutta Gassner
(Sakyadhita UK)

Send to: sakyadhita-uk@gmx.net or: 77 Earlham Road, Earlham Street, Norwich NR2 3PF



Tuesday, November 11, 2008

London Buddhist Centre celebrates 30th anniversary

The FWBO's **London Buddhist Centre** (<http://www.lbc.org.uk>) celebrates its 30th anniversary this week.

To mark the occasion they've arranged a '30th Anniversary Urban Retreat' running from 9th –16th November; it started Sunday with a period of 'setting intentions' for the week ahead. They then moved into more ceremonial mode with a Grand Unveiling, by Sangharakshita, of a new 12-foot triptych, painted by Aloka, for their new basement shrine room.

This will form part of the LBC's new '**Breathing Space**' (<http://lbc.org.uk/Breathingspacehome.htm>).

Breathing Space is the London Buddhist Centre's growing programme for health and wellbeing; it teaches meditation and mindfulness techniques that can help people who have struggled with depression, addiction, stress and anxiety to look after their own mental health. It's also a resource center for carers in the area, helping local carers learn how to reduce the stress that can come with intensive caring responsibilities. They've produced a video, '[Caring for the Carers](#)' and been featured in the UK's '[Guardian](#)' newspaper.



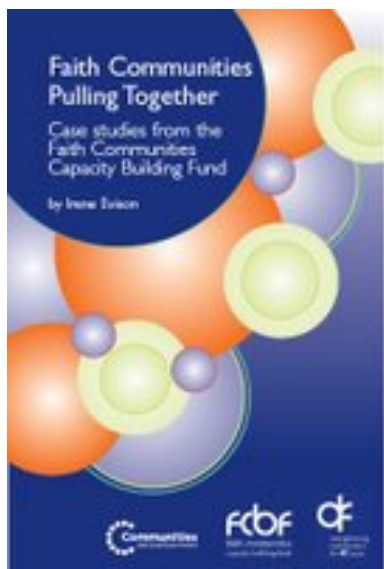
On the Urban Retreat itself - in which 146 people are participating - they say "you decide what commitments to take up while going about your usual routine. We will support your efforts by opening the Centre for morning meditation, hosting special classes, and sending you daily text messages and audio downloads. We start with a day retreat in which the new shrine room painting will be unveiled, and we finish with a day retreat and then Sangha day.

"In the evenings there will be free classes all week, including newcomers' meditation classes from 7.15 to 8.15pm, followed at 8.30pm by a series of very special events celebrating the people and positivity of the LBC. We want everyone who comes to the LBC to attend this year's 30th anniversary Urban Retreat – so the week is free of charge for all".

More details of the retreat - and Breathing Space - are available on the LBC's [website](#).

Breaking News - next June FWBO centres across the world will running an International Urban Retreat to which all members of the whole FWBO Sangha are invited. The dates are June 20-27th; watch this space for more details...

There's an introduction to the theory and practice of Urban Retreats- as developed by the FWBO's Sheffield Buddhist Centre - on FWBO Resources www.fwbo-news.org/resources/urban-retreat-intro.pdf.



Monday, November 10, 2008

Outreach work at the Bristol Buddhist Centre

'[Vitarka](#)' is the Schools and Educational Outreach project based at the Bristol Buddhist Centre. In 2007 they were successful in a grant application to the UK Government's 'Faith Community Capacity Building Fund (FCCB)'; and this year has seen the fruits of their work.

They have recently been featured in a new book '*Faith Communities Pulling Together - Case studies from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund*', published by the UK's Community Development Foundation and available for [purchase](#) or free [download](#).

As the report itself states – "The (Vitarka) project focused on creating practical foundations for the Bristol Buddhist Centre's outreach work with schools, and then increasing its work with schools. The intention was that the work would contribute to greater community cohesion, by enabling children and young people to learn more about faith and increase their understanding about people of different faiths.



“A part-time schools and educational coordinator with experience as a teacher was employed (Kamalamani, shown opposite). Her first priority was to create the resource pack for schools. The material was based on what teachers had been asking for, including a guide to Buddhist festivals, meditation and ‘stilling’ exercises, a form of sitting meditation.

“She also built up a database of local primary and secondary schools to which she could then send a mail shot explaining what the Centre could offer. This included lessons, assemblies and materials, for example a **Buddhist Shrine Kit** which was available for schools to borrow. Follow-up material was made available for the teachers, placed on the Centre’s website”.

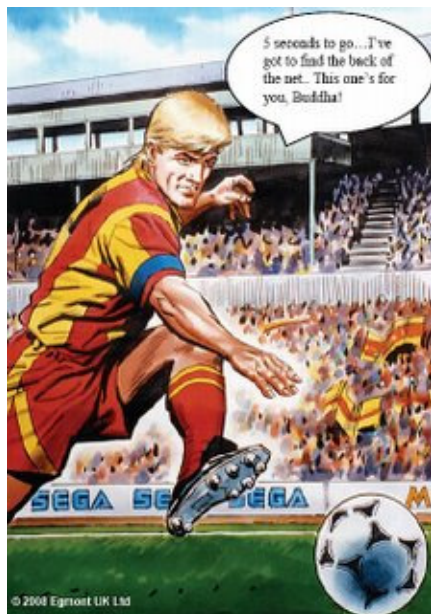
In addition Kamalamani - the coordinator of the Vitarka project - has conducted her own review, which is available online [here](#).

See also the FWBO's **Clear Vision Trust** website <http://www.clear-vision.org/> for award-winning education packs on Buddhism for all key stages.

Saturday, November 08, 2008

Dublin's football triumph

The FWBO's **Dublin Buddhist Centre**, www.dublinbuddhistcentre.org/ have produced a special version of their Newsletter, celebrating their team's recent victory on the football field. FWBO News has obtained a sneak preview and is happy to leak it here. They say -



“It was third time lucky for the boys in green who ran out winners in the FWBO’s annual football World Cup, organized by Jayaraja.

“The Irish Team comprised Osadha, Vajrashura, Ahimsaka, the cultured left foot of Frank Balfe, John Greaney and Javier (a late call-up who apparently qualified for the Republic after correctly locating Ireland on a map!) In the closest-fought competition of recent years, the Irish faced tough games against London and Cambridge before the final showdown with Brighton – at which point the winners would lift the trophy, a draw would hand victory to Buddhafield.

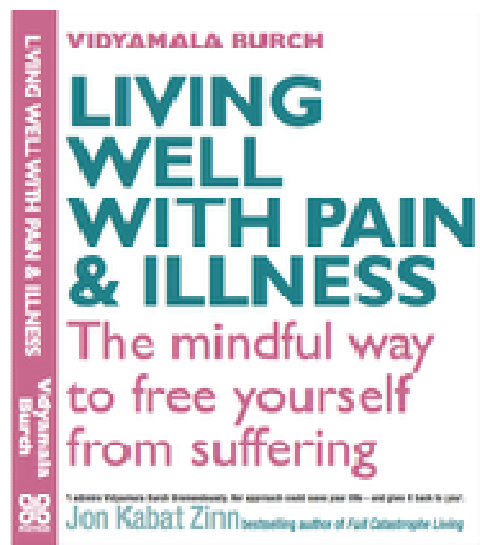
“With 30 seconds remaining and the game still scoreless, Osadha broke free with a man to beat and buried the ball in the bottom left-hand corner securing a win for Ireland”.

[Click here to read on...](#)

Who said you couldn't have fun AND lead a spiritual life?!

Friday, November 07, 2008

New Book from Breathworks - Living Well with Pain and Illness



The FWBO's '[Breathworks](http://breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/)' project (<http://breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/>) is delighted to announce the publication of their first book, 'Living Well With Pain and Illness', written by Breathworks' co-founder Vidyamala, herself a long-term sufferer of chronic pain. They say -

"The book, subtitled 'The mindful way to free yourself from suffering', gives a detailed summary of the principles and practice of the Breathworks programme.

"It is intended for anyone looking for new ways to live with pain and illness or other long-term difficulties. The main focus of the book is physical pain, but the mindfulness techniques are relevant

to illness of any sort. They will help with managing energy and fatigue; also improve quality of life. The techniques are also relevant to mental and emotional suffering, such as stress, anxiety and depression.

"The book starts with Vidyamala's own story of living with pain. It looks at the nature of pain and describes how we can find a new relationship with it using mindfulness. It explores mindfulness and how it can bring wholeness, even if your body is injured or ill. The book then goes on to practical guidance on how to come home to your body through breath awareness and mindful movement, introduces three formal meditation practices with useful tips, and looks at how you can take mindfulness into your daily life.

"The book has been written in part in response to requests from people unable to attend a Breathworks course. It was also written with a strong sense of how Vidyamala felt when she first faced the loneliness of disability and chronic pain with few skills to help, in the hope that some of the lessons learned can help others find an easier way through their own journey with pain and illness.

Highly recommended!

Reviews and recommendations for the book are already arriving – a selection are printed below:

"The cultivation of mindfulness can make a profound difference in how we relate to pain and whether even chronic pain conditions need to turn into endless suffering and misery. This has been known over the past 2600 years, and is now being supported by studies in both medicine and neuroscience. In this book, Vidyamala makes the practice of befriending your experience through mindfulness, however unpleasant or pleasant it may be, both commonsensical and compelling. I admire her tremendously. This is a beautiful and very important book. It could save your life -- and give it back to you."

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., Professor of Medicine Emeritus, Umass Medical School and author of Full Catastrophe Living and Coming to our Senses

"The book is a moving and compelling invitation to bring a radically new way of working with the fact of our pain. It is a book of enormous tenderness and honesty, offering wise guidance on how we can live with greater ease by turning towards what we most fear about our pain and suffering."

Prof Mark Williams, Professor of Clinical Psychology, Dept of Psychiatry, University of Oxford

"Vidyamala Burch has practiced mindfulness for many years, as well as applying the practice to the relief of physical suffering, both her own and that of other people. She has now embodied the fruits of her extensive experience in a very readable and useful book. I hope that Living Well with Pain and Illness will have a wide circulation, in a world where, despite all our progress, there is still so much suffering, some of it unnecessary."

Urgyen Sangharakshita

"This is one of the most generous and empathic books I have read. Nobody with an open mind could fail to learn from it. Readers with and without pain will recognise eloquent descriptions of the traps we fall into when we struggle to avoid what we don't want in our lives."

Dr Amanda Williams, Reader in Clinical Health Psychology, University College London

There's also a review online from the [Irish Times](#).

An Appeal from Karuna Germany



Amoghamati, their chairwoman, has contacted us with this appeal on behalf of the FWBO's [Karuna Germany](http://www.karunadeutschland.org) (<http://www.karunadeutschland.org>). She says

“Karuna Germany was set up in 2006 by a group of German Buddhists associated with the FWBO Centres there, to support projects run in India and Nepal. We were inspired to do so by the example of our friend Kulanandi who works with [Arya Tara Mahila Trust](http://www.indiansisters.org/) (<http://www.indiansisters.org/>) in Pune for half of the year. And also by the example of Karuna Trust in London with whom we co-operate.”

Now we have got the opportunity to post a project on the international funding website [GlobalGiving](#). This is a great chance to raise funds in a broader public outside the Sangha. In fact, we are now participating in a challenge to win a permanent spot on GlobalGiving – but we need your help!. To succeed, we have to raise a minimum sum of 3.000 USD donated by 75 individual donors within the next three weeks.



“Therefore I would like to ask you to consider a donation. It's very easily done online, by PayPal or credit card. It's crucial for us to clear that hurdle of the first 3.000 USD. It's a win-win situation of course because we will get the place on GlobalGiving and all the money will go to our project partners in India! We've very excited about this because the Karuna Trust's experience with GlobalGiving has been very promising and this could therefore open up a precious source of income for our project.

“All details of our project planning and implementation are co-ordinated with Karuna Trust and their capacity building team.” “If you'd like to find

out more, or donate, please visit: our GlobalGiving page -

[Capacity building for women NGOs in India](http://www.globalgiving.com/pr/2500/proj2407a.html) www.globalgiving.com/pr/2500/proj2407a.html

A short summary follows -

“In this project we support grassroots NGOs run by Indian Buddhist women. The women are almost all from the Dalit, or ex-untouchable, communities of India. They do a great job in their work with deprived women and children in the slums. Their aim is to alleviate poverty in the social, medical, educational and economic fields for women and their families.

“However, due to a lack of formal education a capacity building program in professional skills and project management will highly add to their competence and efficiency”.

Click the link above to find out more - and to contribute.

Wednesday, November 05, 2008

English Teaching Project in India ready to roll



Shakyajata sends us this update on upcoming plans to teach English in India. She says -

“A project has been set in motion to teach English to the students of FWBO/TBMSG's **Nagarjuna Training Institute** (NTI, <http://www.nagaloka.org>) in Nagpur, India. And its really happening!

“The students are from some of the most marginalised communities all over India; they're highly motivated to develop themselves and their communities through the practice of ethics and personal growth. They've gone to the NTI for a year's intensive training in the basics of dhamma and social work – and now English.

“Over 60 students have been recruited this year, and more of them than ever before – about a third – are women. No less than nine Western Order Members and mitras have volunteered to teach them English, knowledge of which is a high-value skill that will enhance their effectiveness and life-chances in a number of ways.

“This group of teachers (armed with a readymade programme developed by Adiccabandhu of Clear Vision fame, a powerpoint projector, and other materials) are ready to go - most of us have bought our tickets! At a recent meeting in Birmingham Bhante gave us his blessing and a message for the students: 'Study hard now, reap the fruits later'. He also encouraged us to focus particularly on the needs of women.

“We hope this will be the start of an ongoing project to provide English teaching in India to people from our Movement.

“For the past few months we've been fundraising using a special page on JustGiving; we've raised over £1,500 for materials and expenses but more is needed - any help we get from people now will go a long, long way.

"Please see our fundraising page www.justgiving.com/shakyajata for more details about the project and to contribute”.



Ordination in Colchester, UK

On Sunday October 26th Dave Whiting from Colchester, UK, became Ksantivajra. His new name means "He who is a diamond or thunderbolt of patience, or forbearance". It is Sanskrit, and is spelt with a dot under the 's' and a macron over the first 'a', its anglicised spelling is Kshantivajra. His Private Preceptor was Satyaraja and his Public Preceptor Mahamati. SADHU!

For those interested to know more about the WBO's system of public and private preceptors, we reproduce here a section from Tiratanaloka's 'Handbook' for women requesting ordination. They say -

The private preceptor

"As you continue to deepen your understanding of going for refuge and the F/WBO, you will naturally develop friendships with people who are in the Order and at some point it is likely to become clear that a particular Dharmacharini might become your private preceptor. You can ask any Dharmacharini who has been in the Order at least 10 years to take on this responsibility in relation to your own ordination process. Within the WBO, there is a specific consultation process by which Order members can become private preceptors. This involves everyone in the Order having the opportunity to comment to the person in question on their suitability to take on this responsibility. If the person you ask to be your preceptor has not been through this process, they make undertake to do so when you ask them. If they have already been agreed as a private preceptor then they can take on the responsibility, usually with the agreement of their chapter, if they feel able to do so.

"Again, there is nothing 'set in stone' about who should or should not become your preceptor, but it is often helpful to wait until you have naturally developed a good connection with someone before asking them, as it will be a very significant and lasting relationship. It is sometimes also the case that the circumstances of your relationship change over time and you may both agree that it is more appropriate for another Dharmacharini to be your preceptor.

"When you and a Dharmacharini have agreed that she should become your preceptor, then she will be responsible at some point for proposing you as being ready for ordination. This will probably involve gathering information from a number of people in the Order who know you and who also have a sense that your going for refuge is effective and you are ready to join the Order. When this happens, your preceptor will pass the proposal to the College of Public Preceptors.

The public preceptor

"The Public Preceptors are a worldwide body of senior Order Members who are responsible for overseeing the process of entry into the Order. Other responsibilities that they have include the appointing of private and public preceptors and carrying out public ordinations.

"When your private preceptor proposes that you are ready to be ordained, then someone within the College of Public Preceptors will undertake to be your public preceptor. You may well know this person, but it is unlikely that you will have as close a relationship with them as you do with your private preceptor. It is the public preceptor's responsibility to ensure that all relevant information has been checked and to follow up anything which she is not clear about in relation to readiness for ordination. Once she is satisfied that everything is complete, she will make a recommendation to other public preceptors who all have to agree that you should join the Order.

"Then at the time of your ordination, your private preceptor will witness your effective going for refuge and your public preceptor will welcome you into the Order".

Tiratanaloka (www.tiratanaloka.org.uk) is the FWBO's UK retreat centre dedicated to helping women

prepare for Ordination into the Western Buddhist Order. Padmaloka (www.padmalo.org.uk) is the equivalent for men in the UK; they too have a handbook which can be obtained by emailing them.

Saturday, November 01, 2008

Jnanadhara and the 'Pioneers'

Jnanadhara, one of a dozen Order Members in Dublin, Ireland, writes to say –

“Hi, I'd like to post a item on the FWBO news site about a CD that I've made and a tour that I'm doing in the UK this autumn”.

Jnanadhara is one of 'The Pioneers', a small music/theatre group that is touring the UK and New Zealand over the next few months. In their show of the same name, the group's members are telling the story of their ancestors who chose to leave Victorian England and Ireland to settle in the wilderness that would have been New Zealand 150 years ago. On the way they encounter hardship and uncertainty, freedom and love, but most importantly, the prospect of a new beginning full of possibility.

Their website states – “Using original acoustic music based on texts by leading New Zealand poets, plus story-telling and character portrayal, the three musicians bring the poignant, personal journeys to life. The show also incorporates a visually stunning backdrop of New Zealand scenery and images mixed in with rarely seen digitally reproduced archival images of Magic Lantern slides”.

Full details of tour dates are available on their [website](http://www.seethrewmusic.com/pioneers.htm) <http://www.seethrewmusic.com/pioneers.htm> or [MySpace page](#) which includes several of their songs. A reviewer says “The Pioneers offer a very special experience where music has been woven with theatre and back projection to create a riveting, moving performance”. Catch them if you can! The Pioneers' CD is available from their website.

Jnanadhara may already be known to regular readers of FWBO News, thanks to his guest appearance accompanying Kavyasiddhi as she sings '[The Heart Sutra](#)' (by [Karuna Carpenter](#)) on Videosangha.

There are many other musicians, of all types, in the Order, we plan to bring you a partial round-up of them tomorrow. Watch this space...



Musicians in the Western Buddhist Order

Yesterdays post on FWBO News featured Jnanadhara and his forthcoming tour with his group 'The Pioneers'. Jnanadhara is but one of many musicians in the Western Buddhist Order and today we want to let you know of some of the others – and their websites, if they have them.

In no special order -

Padmamati, lead musician of 'The Real Tuesday Weld' is probably one of the Order's most popular but least-known musicians. Popular in the world, little-known in the Sangha! Check him out at

www.myspace.com/therealtuesdayweld where he's clocked up a remarkable 4578 friends – or on Wikipedia, where his band has its own entry.

In the words of his website, Padmamati (aka Stephen Coates) *"began to create music to try to recreate the sounds he heard in his childhood home - 'the crackling of radios playing swing and easy listening in some distant room.' As The Real Tuesday Weld, he doesn't hesitate to put those sounds to subversive use much like some of his most illustrious forebears and influences—such as Serge Gainsbourg and Ennio Morricone. From his first EP 'The Valentine' on Dreamy records and through many singles, eps and compilation tracks with Motorway Records, Kindercore and Bambini records to the album 'Cupid Meets Psyche' he has developed the sound known as 'Antique Beat'."*

There's some great podcasts available – look for 'The Real Tuesday Weld' or their pseudonym 'The Clerkenwell Kid'. ...

Suryagita (www.alexandervoiceworks.co.nz/voice_singing_lessons.html), who has recently moved back to New Zealand, is a singing coach and features on the self-produced and very beautiful CD 'Fleeting World'. For many years her workshops were a favourite on the Buddhafield Festival.

Also much beloved at the Buddhafield Festival – and beyond – is Mahasukha at www.soulfulsinging.co.uk/about.htm. He's also a singing teacher, and to quote someone from his workshops, "Mahasukha has a talent for bringing people together through singing in such a way that every one feels included, supported and encouraged whatever their ability or temperament. He inspires and builds confidence in others, allowing them to achieve and experience something beyond what they thought possible."

Jinati, the Nottingham Buddhist Centre's choir, have set many mantras and short suttas to music; you can find their [promo video](#) on YouTube.

Achintya (www.achintya-music.co.uk) from Bristol, principle teacher of the South Bristol Buddhist Centre, has for many years moved between his music and his Buddhism. As he himself puts it – *"...a terrible mistake mothballing my geeetar in 1995 and 10 wasted years trying to be a 'good' buddhist - crying at a tsunami benefit concert in 2005 as the wonderful gasworks singers sang stings song fragile - a beautiful timely reminder that only music can heal like this - only music can reconnect me with what is best in me - then remembering songs already written and still to write in my remaining years - the songs started coming again - more love songs ragings and paeans - music can help us understand this crazy journey called being alive..."*

By contrast, Sarajit, recently moved back to his hometown of Nashville, Tennessee, is a musician in the Hip Hop/Latin/Reggae style and founder of the group East Nasty – check their MySpace page www.myspace.com/eastnasty.

Moving towards more classical music, Akasadeva from Cambridge has for many years been a concert pianist and composer, well-known both in UK and South Africa. His website is at www.davidearl-pianist.net where you'll find his biography and upcoming schedule. He will shortly be performing in the Cape Town International Music Festival.

There are sure to be many more musicians and performers of all sorts in the wider FWBO Sangha, and we'd welcome hearing from you if you spot anyone we've missed... Many of course just don't have web presences, for instance 'Tempo Verde', Amoghacitta's three-piece jazz band based at the LBC.

Lastly, this article wouldn't be complete without a mention of the FWBO's London Buddhist Arts Centre www.londonbuddhistartscentre.co.uk, home to many Buddhist practitioners in dance, theatre, music and visual arts.

Friday, October 31, 2008

New premises for the FWBO in Maine, USA



Dharmasuri, Chair of 'Nagaloka', the FWBO's center in Portland, Maine, USA, writes -

"We've moved! After 3 1/2 years on the outskirts of town in a small space adjacent to a beauty salon with limited (if any) walk-in traffic, Nagaloka Buddhist Center has signed a lease on a store front space in downtown Portland.

"On the day of the move we started out with a [seven-fold puja](#) with words of rejoicing for how the sangha has grown and praises of gratitude for the use of the space we were leaving.

"We ritualistically dissolved the shrine at the end of the puja and then worked quietly and harmoniously to pack up our center. When we arrived at 81 Oak Street - our new address - we placed our new standing Buddha on the side walk, which the kids enjoyed playing with, and which passing-by traffic stopped to appreciate.

"The new space is light and spacious with high ceilings and original wooden rafters. We will have a small book store in the front windows and have planned a fall program to include public talks, intro to Buddhism classes and a noon-time meditation course.

"We look forward to growing into our new home!"

You can find details of Nagaloka's classes on their website www.nagalokabuddhistcenter.org.

Thursday, October 30, 2008

Ordinations at Akashavana in Spain



The following women had their public ordination ceremony at [Akashavana](#) (www.akashavana.org), the FWBO's retreat centre for women, high in the mountains of Spain, on Tuesday 28th October:

Anne Rugg becomes **Akashavanda** (first, second and last 'a's are long); 'orchid in luminous space'. Her private preceptor was Dayalocana from the USA and her public preceptor was Dayanandi.

Anastra Madden becomes **Prasannavajri** (long 'i'); 'she who has a vajra / diamond that is pure, clear, bright and tranquil'. Her private preceptor was also Dayalocana and her public preceptor was Maitreyi.

Nancy Lorraine becomes **Maitrimani** (second and last 'i's are long, dot under the 'n'); 'she who has the jewel of friendliness'. Her private preceptor was Maitreyi and her Public preceptor Parami – who also ordained the next three.

Lisa Mayhead becomes **Prajnamala** (last 3 'a's are long); 'a garland of wisdom'. Her private preceptor was Vajragita from Holland.

Fiona Littlejohn becomes **Suvarnasara** (penultimate and last 'a's are long); 'she who has a golden core / essence'. Her private preceptor was Viryadevi from Scotland.

Holley McCoy-Petrie becomes **Animisha**; 'she who looks steady, is vigilant, she who doesn't wink, eyes open, open as a flower'. Her private preceptor was Padmasuri.

Sarah Brimelow becomes **Taramani** (first and second 'a' are long, dot under the 'n'); 'she who has the / a jewel of Tara'. Her private preceptor was also Maitreyi and her public preceptor Ratnadharini.

SADHU!

The photograph shows women from last year's ordination retreat at Akasavana, we include it to show the beauty of the place.

These ordinations bring the total new Order Members joining the Western Buddhist Order this year to 125, almost certainly a record for a single year.

There were twelve ordination ceremonies held on seven countries – India, Spain, Mexico, Belgium, New Zealand, the USA, and the UK. Interestingly, only 3 of the 125 new Order Members were ordained in the UK. There are now approximately 1636 Order Members world-wide, you can see most of them on the **Order Mosaic** (www.fwbo-news.org/resources/mosaic/thumbnail).

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Introducing NNBY - India's National Network of Buddhist Youth



Dharmashalin, a newly ordained Order Member from the UK, is visiting TBMSG and other projects in India. He's recently been with the NNBY – a new national network of Indian Buddhist Youth. He sends us this report, very timely in view of their upcoming worldwide fundraising benefit planned for NNBY. See details on their fundraising page at www.justgiving.com/fullmoonmeditation or at the end of this report.

Dharmashalin writes -

“Over the last few years in India a network called NNBY has emerged. It stands for the National Network of Buddhist Youth.

“NNBY is based on the ideals of the Buddha and Dr . Ambedkar and is supported by members of the

FWBO/TBMSG – although it's not controlled by them. Its catch-phrase is 'Of the youth, for the youth, by the youth.' Not surprisingly, NNBY members emphasise the supportive nature of the work they are doing and the intention that the network itself is a self-organising platform for young people (15-35) themselves to develop their skills and confidence.

“Over the past three years it has been working to encourage disadvantaged young people in India to develop themselves. There's three main aspects to their activity - education, spiritual practice and directly helping others in society. One can see this as growing directly out of what Dr Ambedkar originally wanted for his people, and I'm sure it works better than if adults simply tell them what to do!

“I have spent the last week visiting groups in and around Vidarbha (in Central India) hoping to see for myself how they are organising themselves. One thing that can be said for sure is that I have come away Inspired!



“I was deeply impressed by what I saw on so many different levels, I'd like to tell you just a few of these... Firstly the whole tour was coordinated and organised by the Youths themselves, this included my translator, Arhant, who is only 23 yet did an outstanding job of looking after me, translating and providing more detailed information of how NNBY operates.

“Then in Yavatmal where there is a group which is primarily organised by a 23-year-old girl, many of the other members of that group are in their teens. Not only do they support each other with their studies (there is huge exam pressure in the Indian Education system),

there is also inspiration to practise Dharma and also real friendship. I was particularly moved when a young girl from a different caste (inter-caste friendships are still quite unusual in India) spoke about having a death in the family only a week before, saying she'd found support from her friends within NNBY - so they don't just talk about Bollywood and cricket stars!

“Young people in India are under so much pressure; examinations, family responsibilities, casteism, romance in a traditional society, and the ever-present pressures of money. One of the major challenges facing any Youth-based organisation is how to respond to all this - particularly the need for money, resources and leadership. For NNBY there are encouraging signs - in Wardha we met in an office the local group had found. This is a very positive sign because so often elsewhere in my travels I've met passivity and a desire for others to provide everything.

“I'm happy to say that for them I counted as a Youth, despite my lack of hair! A fact which, when referred to, brought much delight to my audiences. What is really impressive is the lead being taken by the young Indians themselves. Their need for material resources remains however.



“If you have found this account inspiring there is a worldwide fundraising meditation event being held on the full-moon night of 13th December. People around the world will be taking part in sponsored night-time meditations to raise funds for them.

Please look at www.justgiving.com/fullmoonmeditation and consider taking part or sponsoring someone - you can sponsor me if you like! As well as this 'special event page' there's a great introduction to them on their main fundraising page www.justgiving.com/indianbuddhistyouth.

They also have their own website at www.NNBY.org.

“So, to finish with. In the last town we visited, there is no local group yet, though a few people had attended previous events and one young lady (another one!) had organised our program. A Headmaster of a local school provided the venue. At one point he became somewhat insistent on the lack of initiative among the young people and doubtful of any possibility of progress. At this point he issued a challenge; 'Who will form such a group here? Alone and without resources...'

“A pause, and then the girl who had organised the program stood up and said 'I will!' and then in short succession the others rose up as well and said 'I too will form a group, for my own benefit and that of others!' I have to say I found it extremely moving. I was reminded of Dr Ambedkar's conviction that true uplift would only come from his own people, others can help, but ultimately we must transform ourselves.

“This is the message of the Dharma and that is what I found inspiring in the youths I visited. Their desire to come together and organise themselves to assist their own education, spiritually develop and help others is an expression of this principle and I feel honoured and inspired to have witnessed their valiant efforts to establish this organisation.

“Do Please look at www.justgiving.com/fullmoonmeditation and consider taking part or sponsoring someone if you would like to support them.

“With Metta

“Dharmashalin

new FWBO Centre in Barcelona; news from Düsseldorf



A new FWBO Centre has recently opened in Barcelona. Frank Bergmann, one of their main organisers, contacted FWBO News to say -

“Hi, we're happy to let you know we have finally managed to setup regular meditation classes in Barcelona. It took us several attempts and more then 3 years to convert a good idea into concrete action – but we got there!

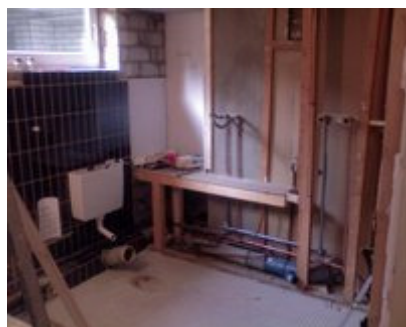
“Some facts:

- The new center in Barcelona is an offspring of the AOBO Center in [Valencia](http://www.budismo-valencia.com) (www.budismo-valencia.com). (The FWBO in Spain is known as the AOBO, 'Los Amigos de la Orden Budista Occidental' as opposed to 'The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order').
- we have a website www.budismo-barcelona.com
- We currently run classes every 2nd Friday. The schedule for the classes is announced on our website.
- The classes are held in a beautiful space in the heart of Barcelona. The space is used for Yoga classes and other activities during the rest of the week. Our address is Carrer Cirera 6, 08003 Barcelona.
- Classes are taught by [Paramachitta](#).

- The language for the classes is Spanish, but there are always English speakers around, so it's no problem for non-Spanish speakers to participate. So come and visit when you're passing Barcelona!
- We don't cover our costs yet. So please spread the word if you know people in Barcelona who might be interested.
- We don't have a good Google-ranking right now, so it would be great if you could tell your webmasters to link to our site. That would help us greatly to attract more participants.
- You can contact us at info@budismo-barcelona.com.
- Photos of the new centre and sangha will follow.

"Metta!

"Frank



Meanwhile FWBO News brings you this update from Sraddhabandhu, manager of the new Centre in Düsseldorf, Germany. He writes -

"An update of our activities: What would a FWBO centre be like without renovating activities?

"Right, it wouldn't be a proper FWBO centre! So, in Düsseldorf we are renovating our bathroom to install a shower and make it accessible for handicapped people. This is quite expensive, but an investment in the future, because we can then have short urban retreats. As soon as the building work is finished, I will announce our first urban retreat. But this will take some time, as you can see from the photo.

"But we have invested in other things as well. Last year we bought a Flip chart, which is not very exiting. But this year we bought a projector as well, so that Sraddhabandhu can enhance his talks with slide shows a little bit. I guess we are now one of the few centers with a projector. But don't worry, our prime motive is still to communicate the Dharma, not to tickle the senses of our guests with fancy movie shows..."

Tuesday, October 28, 2008

Ordinations at Padmaloka



The following men had their Public Ordination into the Western Buddhist Order on Thursday, 23rd October:

Karl Dettmarg becomes DHARMADEVA = The Deva of the Path (Private Preceptor Bodhimitra)

Edwin Bircumshaw becomes PRAJNANATHA = He whose protector is Wisdom (Private Preceptor Jinaraja)

Luke Watson becomes KALYANAMATI = He who has a (spiritually) beautiful, excellent, skilful, auspicious mind or intelligence (Private Preceptor Satyaraja)

The Public Preceptor for all was Saddhaloka, and the ordinations were held at the FWBO's **Padmaloka Retreat Centre** (www.padmalo.org.uk) in Norfolk, UK.

Sadhu!

Saturday, October 25, 2008

The Five Female Buddhas: a 'terma' from Vessantara

Back in June FWBO News reported that Vessantara was embarking on a **three-year retreat** in the mountains of France. He has now gone, but we have recently been alerted to a '**terma**' left by him, and wanted to share this with readers who may be interested.



Specifically, his book '**The Five Female Buddhas**' is available in full on his website. You'll find it at <http://vessantara.net/home/books/five-female-buddhas>. This is a detailed commentary on five pujas, one to each of the Five Female Buddhas. These are mentioned as part of the extended family of figures in the well-known Five Buddha Mandala and appear in many other places in Tibetan Buddhism, for instance in the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

The five pujas were also written by Vessantara and are also available on his website. Of the project as a whole, he says -

"Writing the sadhanas and the pujas was a strange process. There were times when rationally I felt very presumptuous – who was I to be doing such things? Yet at another level it felt very right – as if the figures just needed a channel to communicate themselves, and I happened to be that channel.

"And I decided early on in the process that I needn't worry about the outcome. If there was no spiritual power in the figures then, perhaps after some initial interest, they would die away. But if they spoke to people's spiritual needs, and helped them to engage with the spiritual adventure, then they would find a way to do so despite any imperfections that I might have introduced".

Vessantara's many other books are all available from the FWBO's **Windhorse Publications** (www.windhorsepublications.com).



Thursday, October 23, 2008

Ordinations in India, thirty men join the Order

We are delighted to bring you news that thirty men have recently been ordained into the Western Buddhist Order/Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha at TBMSG's Bordharan Retreat Centre, near Nagpur in

India. We can also bring you most – not quite all! – of their new names. The ceremonies took place on 5th Oct, the remaining names will be added to this post as soon as we receive them.

Jinasena Yapa Gemunu (from Sri Lanka) becomes Jinasen (He who has the Victor as Master)
Mandao Dhare becomes Aryasangha (Exalted non-attachment)
Sandeep Shende becomes Nagasambhava (Arisen from Nagas)
Dnyaneshwar Shende becomes Gunaraja (King of Virtues)
Rahul Tamgadge becomes Gunasagara (Virtue-Ocean)
Manoj Sakhare becomes Aryahrdaya (Noble Heart)
C. B. Ogale becomes Revatadhamma (Beauty of Dhamma)
Dharmaraj Sanghavardhan remains Sanghavardhan (One who develops Spiritual Community)
Vijay Veer becomes Amoghabodhi (Infallible Wisdom)
Balchandra Ramteke becomes Satyasila (Virtuous Follower)
Arup Singh becomes Vimaladitya (Sun of Purity)
Bhopal Singh becomes Vimalapriya (Lover of Purity)
K. U. Gaekwad becomes Punyaveer (Hero of Merits)
Sadashiva Waghmare becomes Punyakirti (Fame of Merits)
Deepak Meshram becomes Punyadhara (Protector/Holder of Merits)
Sanghamitra becomes Arunbodhi (Mountain of Bodhi/Wisdom)
Tukaram Gaekwad becomes Amrutsen (Army of Nectar)
Nagasen Maitrak becomes Nagaghosha (Voice of Purity/Wisdom/Truth)

Ramesh Gajbhiye becomes Pademashura
Moreshwar Gedam becomes Jnanodaya
Kishore Wasnik becomes Veerabodhi
Pundalik Ramteke becomes Aryaveer
Nagarjun becomes Nagaratna
Shekhar Bauddha becomes Amrutratna
Priyadarshi becomes Akshobhyavajra
Sanjay becomes Amoghadarshi
Ambadas Thaware becomes Akshobhyacitta
Gharade becomes Bodhipriya
Prakash Ratnadarshi becomes Manjuvadi
Sunil Pate becomes Aryasiddhi

SADHU!

photos of the ceremony are online at
<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/Ashvajit.Picasa/OrdinationsBorDharanOct2008#slideshow> .

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

Engaged Buddhism in the FWBO



The Network of Engaged Buddhists (NEB) is the UK's main forum for what has become known as 'Engaged Buddhism'. For them, Engaged Buddhism is "engagement in caring and service, in social and environmental protest and analysis, in non-violence as

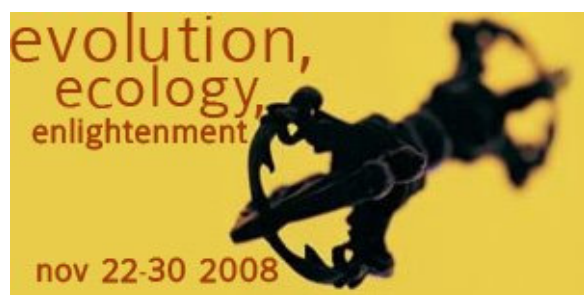
a creative way of overcoming conflicts, and in 'right livelihood' and other initiatives which prefigure a society of the future”.

They go on to say “It also engages with a variety of contemporary and often controversial concerns of relevance to an evolving Buddhism. Engaged Buddhism combines the cultivation of inner peace with active social compassion in a mutually supportive and enriching practice”.

Indra's Net, their magazine (available both in paper and on the web at www.engagedbuddhists.org.uk), has in recent issues carried quite a number of articles by members of the F/WBO.

You can read Saul Deeson and Suddhaka on the [Dhamma Revolution in India](#); Rowan Tilly on [Spiritual Activism](#); Sophia Young (now ordained as Kuladharini) on [Gie's Peace](#) – a lively introduction to Glasgow's 'Shambolic Warriors'. The LBC's ground-breaking Breathing Space project is profiled in [Health and Wellbeing for All](#); and there's an excellent introduction to the significance of Dr. Ambedkar for engaged Buddhists (indeed, for all Buddhists) in [Jai Bhim](#), by Khemasuri.

There's other articles too, but not yet on the internet – for them you'll have to **join NEB** - which is a bargain at £10/year - or £8 for concessions!



In the FWBO itself, besides Gie's Peace, there's other 'engaged Buddhism' projects, some connected to 'The Redwoods'. These are an ad-hoc group of Order Members with a shared commitment to engaged Buddhism and social change, who meet once a year, for a week, in a retreat setting, with no agenda other than waiting to see what emerges.

Strongly linked to the Redwoods is the FWBO's new '**EcoDharma' retreat centre** (www.ecodharma.com), situated in a beautiful and wild part of the Catalan Pyrenees. Guhyapati, it's founder, says “We offer courses, events and retreats which support the realisation of our human potential and the development of an ecological consciousness honouring our mutual belonging within the web of life – drawing on the Buddhist Dharma and the emerging ecological paradigms of our time

“Our courses and retreats take place in a context of sustainable low-impact living, closely woven within the web of elemental nature. These meditation retreats, study seminars and training camps are intended to help people to empower themselves to make changes in themselves and the world consistent with a life-affirming vision”.

Ecodharma has two retreats coming up later this year – 'Evolution, Ecology, and Enlightenment' in November, and 'Exploring EcoDharma' in December.

EcoDharma is probably the FWBO's most remote retreat centre and you'll have to be determined if you want to find your way there...



By chance FWBO News came across Jo Nean's blog '[A Long Way From Eden](#)', where she describes hitch-hiking there all the way from London. She concludes -

“G (Guhyapati) arrives and greets me like an old friend, although we only met once before for a brief ten minute chat at the Buddhafield Festival. He has exactly the white landrover I imagined he would. I get in and we

wind our way up an ever remoter road that turns into a track at steeper and steeper angles. G tells me a little about the centre and points out landscape features as we pass. He also tells me who else is on the retreat and it turns out I know one of them - he will be surprised to see me! There are only 8 of us, but another 3 will arrive over the next few days. My sense of excitement is growing..."

Tuesday, October 21, 2008

Month-long Dhamma programme underway in Amaravati, India



In Amaravati, a city in the very centre of India some 100 miles from Nagpur, a month-long programme is underway of Dhamma talks in a wide range of villages and towns in the surrounding area. The organisers estimate that the public talks, in towns large and small in the Amaravati region, will reach an estimated 15,000 people directly and many thousands more indirectly. Ashvajit, a UK Order Member, is taking part, and has sent FWBO News links to his Picasa photos:

A [slideshow of one of the talks](http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/Ashvajit.Picasa/DhammaTalkByAshvajitInBadnera#slideshow/5256883746863330050) in Badnera is online at <http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/Ashvajit.Picasa/DhammaTalkByAshvajitInBadnera#slideshow/5256883746863330050>, as is photos of their [celebration of Ambedkar Dhammachakra Pravartan](#) – Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism on October 14th. . There's some of Ashvajit himself going a [talk in Amaravati](#).

The programme culminates with a week-long retreat starting on October 24th, which will be led by a team of 25 Order Members from the Amaravati area including Amaravati's Chairwoman Dhammcharini Jayamani.

Organisers of the programme have been vigorously fundraising for some months now and are still appealing for funds. They have done really well, raising almost £5,000 online and a lot more from local door-to-door collections in India. However they are looking for a final £2,000 to fully balance their books - you can contribute on-line using their Justgiving page www.justgiving.com/ashvajit.

TBMSG Amaravati do many things besides big Dhamma programmes - the [TBMSG Amaravati annual report](#) for the 2007-8 year is available on-line at www.fwbo-news.org/features/Amaravati_annual_report_2007-8.pdf. It gives a fascinating glimpse into some of the challenges faced by India's Dalits - and the vigour and creativity with which they are facing them.

Monday, October 20, 2008

Wildmind: meditation teaching, news, and more - an update



site hosts a vast library of meditation-related articles from a wide range of sources.

Wildmind (www.wildmind.org) is the FWBO's US-based website dedicated to teaching meditation. Besides offering an easy and free way to **learn meditation on-line**, their

Every month they issue their meditation newsletter which you can subscribe to at www.wildmind.org/newsletter. Back issues are of course available on their website -

- [September: Spiritual Abundance](#)
- [August: Getting Unstuck](#)
- [July: Friendship as Practice](#)
- [June: Meditating with the Body](#)

In addition to these, they've built up a vast library of meditation-related articles of all sorts.

Their **Meditation in the News** service tracks exactly that, while the fascinating '**Meditation Zeitgeist**' blog offers a myriad fascinating glimpses of how Buddhist meditation is entering – and affecting – American culture.

More personally, their very own Auntie Suvanna is available to answer all those tricky questions that arise for the novice practitioner. What is the Buddhist approach to excess **body hair**? How does Enlightenment relate to the **Matrix**? And many more...

In 'real life' they have a rich section on '**Applied Meditation**' which among other things details their **prison work**, their **translation projects**, meditation and pain management, and meditation for stress and depression.

And in case all that's not enough, there is the new online **Open Circle** community at www.wildmind.org/mindworks/open-circle, which they describe as part on-line book club, part Buddhism course - an opportunity to explore key Buddhist concepts with like-minded people. They are currently exploring Sangharakshita's excellent book 'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path', available either direct from them or any good bookstore.



Saturday, October 18, 2008

First steps in Mauritania...

Visiting Africa anytime soon? You might be interested in this report from Kieran Barry, a mitra who has for many years lived at the FWBO's **Vajraloka Meditation Centre** (<http://vajraloka.com/>) in Wales...

"After six years in the Welsh hills, I have now left Vajraloka and am headed for very different climes.

“Next week I will be moving to Mauritania in West Africa. For those that don't know (most of you I suspect!) Mauritania is located between Morocco (and the disputed Western Sahara) to the north, and Senegal to the south. It is a huge country but is almost all desert with few towns and only four proper roads...I have already driven on three-quarters of them!“I will be living in the capital, Nouakchott, a dusty and largely unprepossessing town where my girlfriend, Alessandra, has been living and working for the last two years. She has been engaged with the United Nations, trying to help democracy to emerge, only to see things stutter as the military took over in a [coup](#) this September - in fact on the very day I was to buy my ticket!

“Despite this little setback, I am to continue with my plans to set up a yoga school in the desert, called, appropriately enough, 'DesertYoga' (<http://sites.google.com/site/desertyoga1>). I have done some teaching out there on previous visits and it seems that people (mostly French ex-pats) seem keen to embrace the physical and spiritual dimensions of yoga. There have also been some requests to teach meditation which I may respond to in time.

“So, the FWBO extends – perhaps! - to include the 'République Islamique de Mauritanie“!

“If anyone finds themselves passing through Nouakchott, please do [get in touch](#) and come and visit".
Kieran Barry.

New Centre for the FWBO in Ghent, Belgium



For over ten years now there has been an FWBO presence in the old city of Gent, in Belgium. Their sangha has slowly grown from just one – Dhammaketu – to the present chapter of five Order Members and many mitras and friends, and in August they celebrated their first ordination on Belgian soil.

Their [existing centre](#), however, has not grown – in fact they have outgrown it! Now, happily, they are moving to new, much larger premises, and this month members of the Gent sangha are hard at

work in their new place. They are doing a lot of the building work themselves and you can follow their progress (in Dutch) on their [new centre blog](#). Along with the building work they are performing dedication rituals and sangha events; not reading Dutch, FWBO News can only guess at the meaning, but a flavour can be guessed from a rather quirky translation provided by the [Yahoo Babelfish](#) service –

“The normal backstage sounds of a yard become here in the old streetstreet street in default gelaten: no droning radio barge, none empty bierflesjes, none whistling and grapjesmakende men in upper part of the body bares.

Only the harmonious singing of Peggy's descant, the gentle gone and sounds of verfröl-en brush, the fine aromas of green - and camomile tea and men and women who train themselves in honest, pleasant and well-advised speech.

Lively I took farewell of the sanghagenoten but at the buitenstappen could not I it let my tongue stick out to the other side. My lively poll kept now however score: the sun seemed, gentle roar blew by the Ghent streets...”

We hope to bring a new report (in English!) when the centre opens. You can find details of their classes [here](#) www.gent.vwbo.net, along with links to the other FWBO centres and groups in Holland and the Low Countries.

Wednesday, October 15, 2008

Buddhafield East celebrates best-ever year



Buddhafield East (<http://buddhafieldeast.com>) is a network of FWBO practitioners living around the East of England – Colchester, Ipswich, Norwich, Cambridge, and elsewhere across East Anglia. Following Buddhafield's lead, they're inspired by the same approach to practice – closeness to nature, simple living, an imaginative approach to ritual, and the creation of "a positive sphere of influence" - which they hope will continue to grow, unfold and develop.

Teresa Coldicott from Norwich reports on their Summer Gathering –

"Flags flew, people danced and meditated, Padmavajra gave three amazing talks and 120 of us had a wonderful time in the Suffolk countryside over the August Bank Holiday weekend. This was our fifth year and fourth gathering, and was very special for me, as so many of

us from the Norwich sangha were there.

"The days began with meditation in the Rainbow tent, a real country experience hearing rooks in the trees and machines harvesting grain in the nearby fields. This was followed by breakfast and a work period when vegetables and firewood were chopped, compost toilets were cleaned and hurricane lamps collected from round the field. Then there were the talks from Padmavajra, incredibly inspiring on the theme of the Confident Heart, followed by discussion groups.

"The meals were excellent, sitting round the fire or on cushions in the dining tent, chatting with friends as we fended off the wasps – in a very mettful way of course...

"Afternoons had many & varied workshops. A highlight was Jnanamitra's kiln, built on site from earth & straw cob, filled with pots & sculptures, looking like an old fashioned steam engine as it was fired up with huge bellows and smoke poured out of its hat chimney. Capoeira and volleyball kept us active, energy and yoga workshops together with a Healing Space kept us well. There was space for creativity or just sitting by the fire chatting or reading.

"After supper each evening there was story telling, then a ritual around the theme with a puja to follow, then sauna & hot tubs for those who wanted them, followed by music round the fire & being curled up in bed in tent or van to sleep soundly till the cock crowed in the morning".

2008 has been their best year yet, with a real strengthening of their network across East Anglia. You won't just find them in a field though - they're pretty up-to-date technically, and probably have more web presences than any other FWBO!

There's a beautiful new Buddhafield East website at <http://buddhafieldeast.com> and you can find them on [Facebook](#), [Picasa](#), [MySpace](#), and finally it's possible to join their on-line message list by [emailing them](#).

In the wider Buddhafield family, Buddhafield North also have a website - see www.buddhafieldnorth.org.uk, and rumours are reaching us that Buddhafield's own web presence www.buddhafield.com may get an overhaul soon!

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

Offering hope to India's Farmers



October 14th is the anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism 52 years ago. Although much has changed in India since then, many things have not – among them the economic struggles faced daily by many of India's 'low-caste' and 'ex-untouchable' people.

Dr Samantha Bhaware, a Dhammamitra from the FWBO's **Llangollen Sangha**, has spent the last 9 months out in India. During

this time, she has come face-to-face with a difficult national crisis – vast numbers of farmer suicides due to problems with Genetically Modified crops and chemical agriculture.

She reports –

“These are creating debt, crop failures and environmental damage in an already harsh farming environment. Between 2001 and 2005, it was estimated that over 32,000 farmers committed suicide in India for these reasons and it continues every day.

“When faced with such a difficult situation, it could have been easy to turn away and think it simply “isn't my problem”. Seeing these suicides happening, with government aid not reaching these desperate farmers, I couldn't ignore such suffering, so I decided to help them in whatever way that I could.

“So, my husband, Manidhamma, and I visited Mohadi, his ancestral village in rural Vidarbha, an area of Maharashtra worst hit by the suicides. We spoke to his childhood friends who have very little farmland – mostly no more than 10 acres – to support their whole family. They spoke of fear and confusion following pressure by foreign multinational companies to buy seeds and chemicals to grow crops that are failing. They can see that these methods are killing the land, but feel they have little option but to farm in this way.

“I offered to come and talk about my interests – **Permaculture** (a sustainable agriculture design method), natural farming (inspired by **Masanobu Fukuoka**'s work) and organic farming – to help them find an alternative to methods that are clearly not working. Masanobu Fukuoka was a Japanese Zen Buddhist and his methods closely follow Buddhist ethics, especially of non-harm. I am therefore very inspired by his work.

“On 14th September, we held a workshop in Mohadi, which was attended by over 60 locals. Many farmers were sceptical, which we expected, and were worried about losing whatever little income they have. However, by the end of the day, 15 farmers were keen to experiment on a part of their land. We held a follow-up workshop on 28th of September to provide much needed initial support. Many more farmers are now hoping to try these methods too.

“Adopting these methods will help farmers gain independence and self-respect. I am confident that the methods will work and that they will soon reap the benefits of an enriched, living soil and freedom from debt. This view is also held by the **Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation** (www.moffindia.com),

with whom I am working for support and inspiration. I am continuing to work with this village and hope to extend out to other villages. Everywhere we go, farmers want to learn about these techniques; we already have two more villages waiting for workshops. I feel very inspired by this work as it will give these people immediate benefits and is giving them hope in a situation which is worsening by the day”.

Samantha is setting up a Centre for Non-Violent Farming to help facilitate such projects and to carry out research to further help the farmers. Initially, she is creating a travelling library to help farmers educate themselves about sustainable farming alternatives. She is also arranging visits for the farmers to farms that have successfully used these methods. She hopes that people can come to help teach and empower villagers, as well as to help on practical projects, such as tree planting and farm work. If you are interested in this work, she would very much like to hear from you. Samantha can be contacted by [email](mailto:sam_is_online@hotmail.com) at sam_is_online@hotmail.com.

Links:

Vidarbha Suicides: http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/2007/70_farmer_suicides_in_vidarbha_1.html
<http://www.dnaindia.com/report.asp?NewsID=1049554>

Government Report on Suicides:

<http://www.yashada.org/organisation/FarmersSuicideExcerpts.pdf>

The **Centre for Non-Violent Farming** - note that this website is still under construction. Bookmark it now, visit later!

Monday, October 13, 2008

First-ever Buddhist Centre for FWBO Leeds



FWBO Leeds has written to say:

“We are thrilled to announce that Leeds Buddhist Centre has moved into new premises. The new centre is at - FWBO Leeds Buddhist Centre, 4th Floor, Leeds Bridge House, Hunslet Road Leeds LS10 1JN

There has been an FWBO presence in Leeds for very many years but – until now – always in rented rooms. This move is therefore a major shift for them – they’ve gone from having just two evenings a week available for their activities to their own space ‘24/7’.

The building itself is a Leeds landmark, and very central: Leeds Bridge House was built about 1880 as a Temperance Hotel by John James Cousins, a Leeds banker. It’s been used for many purposes over the years and only narrowly survived demolition in the 1960s. Today, its bold Flatiron New-York-inspired architecture is regarded as one of the landmarks of the city. It’s been described as “a brick and terracotta dream ship sailing into a brave teetotal future for the working classes” – how interesting that it now houses a Buddhist Centre!

They have a delightful website at www.leedsbuddhistcentre.org, where you can find details of their various classes and courses, including their **University classes** - many FWBO centres used to run these, but the Leeds centres is one of only a few still doing so.

Saturday, October 11, 2008

Rijumati's travels, part VII - following Kukai in Japan...



Part VII of Rijumati's travels is now available on FWBO Features at www.fwbo-news.org/features/. He says -

“Dear Friends, “Here is a long piece about my 7 day walk along part of the ancient 88 Temples pilgrimage route around Shikoku island, known sometimes as the ‘Shikoku 88’. This was one of the highlights of my time in Japan, both in terms of stunning scenes and personal reflections. I found the pilgrimage very inspiring and challenging and I intend to return to Japan at some point and finish the 1200km walk (I only did the first 175km on this occasion). It was

such a valuable experience that I would strongly recommend it to anyone, even those who don't consider themselves Buddhist.

“The Shikoku 88 is absolutely not a pleasant ramble. Undertaken by foot, it is hard-graft walking, often along busy highways, sometimes without even the protection of a pavement. Naturally the route, wherever possible, takes in the glorious beauty of Shikoku island: its mountains and forests, cliffs and rivers, the sky and the sea. But it is definitely a mixed bag.

“So the question "why?" remains. The official reason is that through undertaking the pilgrimage one enlists the aid and support of one of the greatest of all Buddhist saints, Kukai or Kobo Daishi as he is honorifically known in Japan. Kukai was born on Shikoku in the 8th century, was enlightened at Shikoku's southern cape, Muroto, and is attributed with founding most of the sacred 88 temples on the pilgrimage. Many of the temples tell special stories about Kukai's visit: here he conquered a dragon, here he carved a Buddha, here he created a stream that always runs pure.

“Yet in a sense there is no universal answer to this question. The answer must be sought in the heart of every would-be or actual *henro*, or pilgrim...”



Free Buddhist Audio News - Puja in Sanskrit

Welcome to the news from [Free Buddhist Audio](http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com), at www.freebuddhistaudio.com, the free download, podcast and streaming service from the Dharmachakra audio and text archives. To receive more regular updates on the site, you can always [subscribe](#) to our own blog.

The Sevenfold Puja in Sanskrit

Short but sweet this week. As promised last time, we wanted to tell you about [a new recording of a special puja](#) from the American Order Convention 2008. It's unusual to hear the Sevenfold Puja performed in Sanskrit and English, so a real treat for all ritual lovers courtesy of Satyadhana, the puja leader. And it's all augmented by some rather lovely harmonic chanting of the Manjushri (Manjugosha) mantra. There's also a special section of chanting at the end, wishing long life for Punya, a much-loved member of the Order who was seriously ill at the time of recording (and still is). The recording was made at Jikoji Retreat Center, California, 2008.

This puja will be of interest to anyone studying the place of ritual in the FWBO, especially as part of the [Dharma Training Course for Mitras](http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/study/foundation) – see <http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/study/foundation> .

Sangharakshita's news



It has been quite some time since news of Sangharakshita has appeared in Shabda. However we have now received a report from Dharmamati, his secretary, and are pleased to reproduce it here -

"Sangharakshita has been very active in recent months, visiting centres both here and abroad, seeing individuals nearly every day, continuing working on 'Precious Garland Seminar' with Samacitta and taking regular study with a small local men's chapter.

Bhante's health:

Bhante has been in quite good health over the last couple of months. His eyesight has even improved a little and he has started to be able to read large print publications and smallerprint with the aid of an illuminated magnifying glass and he has even been able to draft a few letters. This said, however, his eyesight is still limited and most things have to be read to him.

June:

The last report concluded with Bhante attending the Guhyaloka reunion at Padmaloka. At the end of this month he was invited to a conference organised by The Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK) and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy-UK. the conference was called The British Buddhist Landscape - Transplantation and Growth. He was one of the two keynote speakers for the conference, the other being Stephen Bachelor.

The FWBO had quite a strong presence at the conference, not only with speakers, but with artworks contributed to an exhibition of Buddhist art from Britain. Bhante's talk was entitled 'Looking back and forward a little, reminiscences and reflections. In it he recollected his association with British Buddhism especially his time with the Buddhist society in the early 1940s in London. He also gave some reflections about the future. (for more about the conference see the [report](#) on FWBO News.

July:

July was quite a full month with visits to Sheffield, Berlin and leading study for the Men Mitra Convenors at Padmaloka. In both Sheffield and Berlin Bhante gave a Q&A session for Order members and a public talk.

In Sheffield Bhante gave a talk on something that he has rarely talked about in public, 'Rebirth'. This was a personal talk that included reflections on dreams, visions and experiences from his life.

In Berlin the public talk was on the 'Six distinctive emphases of the FWBO' According to the local sangha this was a very timely talk in helping establish what the FWBO has to offer in Berlin; a talk covering some of the same ground was given in Birmingham and is available from FreeBuddhistAudio. During the Men Mitra Convenors meeting at Padmaloka Bhante led ten study sessions over a period of 5 days on 'The Path of Regular and Path of Irregular Steps'.

August:

During August Bhante spent most of the month at Madhyamaloka. Towards the end of the month Bhante celebrated his 83rd Birthday. A special event was organised by Siddhisambhava with invited guests from Madhyamaloka community, Uddiyana trustees and those involved in the recent fundraising appeal for Bhante's support. Happily to say the goal was exceeded due to the generosity of many individual Order members.

Two days after this Bhante left for Spain where he attended an Order retreat. The venue was Tushita

retreat centre run by the FPMT in the hills behind Barcelona. During this event Bhante gave a q&A session for Order Members. From there he travelled to Valencia where he stayed in the men's community. During his stay in Valencia Bhante gave a public talk at the Valencia Buddhist Centre. the theme this time was Padmasambhava, his talk included the five poisons and the five spiritual faculties. This event was attended by over 150 people.

The next event was an historic one, the public launch of the Spanish translation of 'A Survey of Buddhism'. The event took place in a lecture room at a University.

Most recently, Bhante has been to Krakow, Poland where he opened Sanghaloka, a new FWBO centre and our first in Poland. Sangharakshita's new website is online at www.sangharakshita.org

Thursday, October 09, 2008

Two deaths in the Order

FWBO News has to report the sad deaths of two Order Members, Dharmacharis Mahadana and Adarsha.



Adarsha died at approximately 11.30 pm on 2nd October 2008. He was at Bombay Airport, where he was returning to the U.K. after a routine visit to Karuna Trust projects in India.

He worked for the Karuna Trust and is part of the North London Buddhist Centre Sangha. His death was very sudden and unexpected. His funeral will be held on Monday October 13th at the North London Buddhist Centre and at a nearby crematorium.

Adarsha was 38 years old, came in contact with the FWBO in Lancaster during the nineties, after which he moved to India for a time and then to London to join the Karuna Trust. He was ordained in March 2007, when he took the sadhana of Padmasambhava.

He is going to be hugely missed by his mother, father and two brothers, and his very many friends in the Sangha in the U.K., India and elsewhere. At this time we can all send our metta to Adarsha, his family and his friends.

If you would like to make a donation in his memory there is a memorial page at www.justgiving.com/adarsha. All monies collected will go towards Karuna's Dhamma projects in India.



Mahadana, from Pune, India, passed away at 9:15 pm on Saturday 13th Sept 2008, at the age of 83. The funeral ceremony took place the next morning at 11:00 am. Amrutdeep, Coordinator of the Indian Order Convenors' Team, says -

"Mahadana was born in a poor Dalit family. He had many struggles in his early life. He was not an educated man, but devoted to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. He was a member of the 'Samata Sainik Dal' when he was quite young; this was a group which used to take care of security for Dr. Ambedkar at the time of public meetings. He was a true follower of Dr. Ambedkar and an honest activist of his movement.

"He was having strong faith in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and practising Buddhism seriously. Bhante Sangharakshita had had very good impact on his life and he became follower of him. He got ordained in our Order in 1999 and his whole life style has changed remarkably.

"He used to sell Buddhayan (a Marathi-language magazine produced by TBMSG) by visiting people door to door in various slums in Pune. Due to his very strong faith and wish he could learn how to read and write at a very late age. He never took rest, with lots of Virya and spirit he used to visit to common and simple people to teach Dhamma to them.

"He was a true propagator of Dhamma, and in a true sense he was 'MAHADANA', which means Great Generosity. He was well respected and popular amongst all Buddhist people of society. He always helped harmonising the Order, for a few years he was the security person at the Mahavihara, Pune.

"At the end of his life he was ill but even in such a condition he could come to attend the 'Order Day' at the Mahavihar in Pune last month on Sunday 3rd Aug. A few days before he died, he expressed his strong desire that he wanted to attend the forthcoming Order Convention at Bodhgaya and would like to meet Bhante and all his brothers and sisters in the whole Order at the Convention.

"With Metta, Amrutdeep".

Wednesday, October 08, 2008



11 women ordained in India

The following women had their public ordination on Sunday the 21st of September at the Hsuan Tsang retreat centre, Bor Dharan, central India.

The new names as understood in India are:-

Private preceptor Jnanasuri:

- 1) Meena Jadhav from Thane, Mumbai, becomes Kshantishri (She whose radiance is patience).
- 2) Chandraprabha Wankhade from Ulhasnagar, Mumbai, becomes Kshantichandra (Moon of patience).
- 3) Suman Meshram from Amaravati becomes Achalasuri (Immovable Heroine).
- 4) Gita Pate from Wardha becomes Amitaprabha (She whose light is immeasurable/boundless).
- 5) Satya Teltumbde from Wardha becomes Amitasatya (Immeasurable Truth).
- 6) Vanutai Dofe from Nagpur becomes Aryashanti (Noble Peace).
- 7) Purnavati Pillewar from Nagpur becomes Aryapadma (Noble Lotus).

Private preceptor Vajrasuri:

- 8) Sarika Wankhede from Amaravati becomes Abhyanivita (Accompanied by fearlessness).
- 9) Rama Lanjewar from Nagpur becomes Abhyadana (She who gives fearlessness).

Private preceptor Karunamaya:

- 10) Savita Shende from Nagpur becomes Prajnasakhi (Friend of Wisdom).
- 11) Pratibha Sakhre from Nagpur becomes Muditamayi (She who is full of mudita, or sympathetic joy).

The public preceptor was Karunamaya.

This is the largest group of women to be ordained together in India for many years, perhaps even a record.

Sadhu!

Monday, October 06, 2008

Clear Vision in Asia - from Bhutan to Bangkok



A year on from an assignment working for Bhutan's Ministry of Education, the FWBO's Clear Vision Trust (www.clear-vision.org) has just returned from an international conference on Buddhism and Ethics, held in Thailand near Bangkok.

As education officer at Clear Vision, Munisha was invited to give a presentation on "Using Video to teach Buddhist Ethics in British Schools" at the first conference of the International Association of Buddhist Universities ([IABU](http://www.iabu.org)). (The FWBO's [Dharmapala College](http://www.dharmapalacollege.org) (www.dharmapalacollege.org) is a member of the IABU).



Munisha writes: "It was extraordinary to be part of a gathering of up to 3000 Buddhists, mostly Asian monks, as well as nuns and a small number of westerners. I went with Mokshapriya and Aparajita. Among the robes of yellow or brown or stylish grey linen, our kesas attracted a fair amount of interest, as did our display of Clear Vision DVDs for schools. The Dharma is not yet available in such formats in Asia!

"My strong sense is that young people of Buddhist background are losing touch with Buddhism, both in the UK and across Asia. You have to wonder whether there will be another generation of lay Buddhists as young people often know nothing of the Dharma and are less and less interested in tradition. To be fair, there were conference presentations from people who are running Dharma activities for young

people in Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka, one or two of them innovative, but still I suspect they are exceptions.

Meanwhile, some very good teaching of Buddhism for young people is being delivered in British schools, by and for non-Buddhists, using modern teaching materials such as Clear Vision's. If Asian young people are to be interested in the Dharma, I'd argue Asian Buddhists could benefit from seeing what we are doing here in Britain.

"We went hoping to spread the word about our materials and invite sponsorship and dana. It was a bonus to meet Asian Buddhists who approached us to tell us of their respect for Bhante and the importance of his work for the future of Buddhism. Then there's my favourite souvenir from the conference pack: a mustard yellow umbrella with a limb of the Eightfold Path printed on each section!"

Munisha's paper is available on FWBO Features. This is a longer, written version of her PowerPoint presentation to the conference, which included video clips.

Click [here](#) to see what Clear Vision has to offer school teachers and students.

Saturday, October 04, 2008

A letter from the Forest: Insight retreats in Scotland



Smritiratna is an Order Member who has for some years now been a resident teacher at the FWBO's Dhanakosa Retreat Centre in Scotland (www.dhanakosa.com). Between retreats, he lives in the woods as a hermit, and has written FWBO News a 'Letter from the Forest'.

In it he describes his coming three-month retreat at Guhyaloka in Spain and his hopes for the 'Stilling and Seeing Through' insight retreats he will be leading on his return. At the end of his letter you'll find links to fuller descriptions of his approach to his practice - and to the development of insight.

"Dear All,

"I am writing this at the window of the forest cabin where I spend much of my time these days, a mile from Dhanakosa Retreat Centre in Scotland. Looking up, a profusion of green leaves meets my gaze, thousands of grasses and ferns, spruces and larches, oaks and willows, birches and rowans, lichens and mosses. This rich variety arises in response to the rains that come so often here. Without the rains there would be only rock and sand as far as the eye could see. But the rains give life to the earth and green things flourish.

"This puts me in mind of the first teaching of the Buddha, the one celebrated by Dharma Day at the full moon of the Indian month Asalha (June/July). I believe the torrential rains of the Indian monsoon commence around mid-June. So this first outpouring of the Dharma teaching of the Buddha was accompanied by 'the soft thunder of the rain on leaves'. It came to be known as the Dhamma-cakka-pavattana Sutta, (the '*Dhamma-wheel-set-rolling*'). The new Buddha has sought out the five ascetics who had shunned him before. Now deeply moved by his appearance and the quality of his presence among them, the five open their hearts once more and their teacher expounds the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path. Transcendental Insight arises first in Kondanna. The Truth is out, the Dharma Wheel set rolling, and, eight-spoked like the Eightfold Path, it has rolled down the centuries, rolled through the lives of generations of the Buddha's disciples and is rolling still.

"Two years ago I spent the Autumn at Guhyaloka, Spain, on the Vihara retreat for Dharmacharis. We were in silence for ten weeks. As the basis of my daily practice, I chose this first Sutta of the Buddha, together with his second. Following the Eightfold Path as my system of practises, I cultivated vision and devotion, made efforts to maintain good moods, practised mindfulness and a range of meditations in accord with Bhante Sangharakshita's system. Day and night I returned to the theme of impermanence, a pile of animal bones on my shrine, laid out like a skeleton at the feet of the Buddhas. Every day I sat before them in meditations – letting go the aggregates as best I could, and opening my heart to the Buddhas and All.

"This system proved effective so the following year, when I introduced insight meditations on the 'Stilling and Seeing Through' retreats at Dhanakosa, they were framed within the Noble Eightfold Path. Practised as a spiral path, you wheel around it over and over. Each new glimpse of the Vision sends a new ripple through devotion, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, meditation, stirring new insights into the Vision that in turn send a new wave through the eight spokes or limbs of the Dharma life.

"By the time you read this I'll be at Guhyaloka for another three month retreat. During the life of the Buddha, many of his disciples were forest renunciates for whom the annual Rains Retreat was regarded as an essential part of their practise. For nine months they'd wander from place to place, living the Dharma

life in the open air, sharing the Dharma with the people. But for the three months of the monsoon rains, when the roads and paths were impassable, they would camp together in communities, dwelling in caves or temporary huts. These were the annual Rains Retreats. Inspired by their example, I plan to do a three month retreat every year from now on. This year at Guhyaloka seven Dharmacharis will attend for the whole three months while another nine will attend for one or two months.

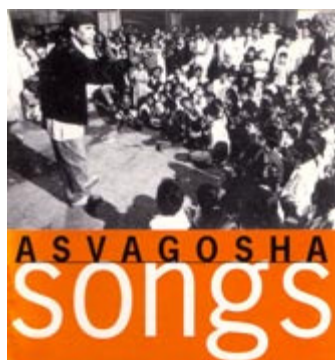
"I'll return by December, in time to lead another Stilling and Seeing Through retreat, and then another at Vajraloka Retreat Centre, Wales. These retreats assume prior knowledge of the mindfulness of breathing and metta bhavana, also a basic understanding of the Dharma and of the Sevenfold Puja. For the first few days we'll be settling and softening, in mindfulness and metta. Then we'll contemplate the natural elements and spend a day on 'transience and true refuge' before returning to 'visionary devotion' at the end. If you would like to know more about these retreats, you could either read my long and detailed article or Joe's short one, both on FWBO Features, or else try the websites of [Dhanakosa](#) or [Vajraloka](#).

"Bye for now!

"Yours truly,
Smritiratna.

Friday, October 03, 2008

Free Buddhist Audio News - Asvagosha and Dharma Training Course



Welcome to the news from [Free Buddhist Audio](#), www.freebuddhistaudio.com, the free download, podcast and streaming service from the Dharmachakra audio and text archives. To receive more regular updates on the site, you can always [subscribe](#) to our own blog.

If you haven't discovered our free monthly [podcast](#) yet, then this is a great time to start! Over 10,000 people now subscribe to this service (you can get it easily via [iTunes](#)), and we've already distributed over 350,000 Dharma talks by podcast since late 2005.

The latest episode of the **podcast** has just appeared online, and this month it's a wee bit different! [This recording of songs](#) (<http://freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=LOC59>) from the Asvagosha project is a real find in the [Archives](#).

The Asvagosha project was set up in India in the early 1990s as a way of developing cultural activities among poor 'ex-Untouchable' communities in slums and rural areas. Teams of performers visit the localities and put on performances of sketches and specially composed songs. The shows reflect the concerns that are uppermost in the minds of the people from these communities- issues such as alcoholism, domestic violence, superstition, and child health. The performers bring a level of humour and energy to their performances, ensuring that the messages are conveyed in a straightforward, unpatronising way.

For more on the Karuna Trust's vital work with 'ex-Untouchable' Indian Buddhists, see their [website](http://www.karuna.org) www.karuna.org.

Dharma Training Course for Mitras - Update

Some important update information for you on the course this week.

– **Corrected versions of Parts 2 and 5 of the Foundation Year** are now available. Please re-download Week 4 of each Part, and the 'Complete' Part files (under the 'All' tab):

[Foundation Year](#)

- Two brand new recordings of FWBO puja and chanting, commissioned for the course, are now also online:

[Tiratana Vandana](#)

[Sevenfold Puja](#)

Thursday, October 02, 2008

New Dhamma fundraising for India



FWBO Dhammaloka is probably not a well-known name to most practitioners in the FWBO. But that might be about to change...

Dhammaloka means 'Realm of the Dhamma', or 'The Land of the Teaching of the Buddha', and FWBO Dhammaloka is a UK charity dedicated to helping Indian people revive Buddhism and Buddhist values - compassion, wisdom, and equality of opportunity - all across India.

Although the charity has been registered for some time it was almost-dormant until May this year, when it registered an internet fundraising account with JustGiving – and now, only four months later, they have just celebrated raising their first £10,000 (\$18,000) for Dhamma projects in India.

Lokabandhu told FWBO News “Dhammaloka has no full-time or even part-time staff – just the charity trustees, who are all busy elsewhere - so from the first we adopted a decentralised strategy of facilitating the fundraising efforts of others rather than trying to do it all themselves.

“This paid off very quickly, with over a dozen pages registered under Dhammaloka’s name on justgiving, each describing a different Dhamma project in India. Although they span a wide range of projects, and are all run by different teams in different parts of the country, they are all under TBMSG’s overall umbrella. Each of the fundraising pages was then promoted – often from India itself – by those directly committed to the project, with Dhammaloka providing a backup role of adviser and quality guarantor. And within four months, £10,000 had been donated!”

You can see a complete list of Dhammaloka’s JustGiving appeals [here](#), including the forthcoming 'jumbo retreats' in [Bodh Gaya](#) and [Amaravati](#); [Vimalabhumi](#) (a planned South Indian retreat centre), the [Buddha Festival](#), and more.

Dhammaloka's own donations page is here www.justgiving.com/fwbodhammaloka - donations made here will be allocated by Dhammaloka’s trustees according to need.

Future plans include their first sponsored event, which will be a world-wide all-night meditation in aid of NNBY, India's new National Network of Buddhist Youth. This has set itself a target of raising £5,000 through gathering over 100 sponsored meditators from all FWBO and TBMSG centres worldwide, the plan is to promote the event almost exclusively through the burgeoning FWBO, TBMSG, and NNBY presences on social-networking sites such as Facebook and Orkut. You can take part in this by meditating (pledge to do so [here](#)) or donating here - www.justgiving.com/fullmoonmeditation.

And check [Facebook](#) or [Orkut](#) for more...

Wednesday, October 01, 2008

Sanghaloka - the new FWBO Buddhist Centre in Krakow, Poland



Wednesday 17th September saw the opening of the new FWBO Buddhist Centre in Krakow, Poland. The name of the Centre is Sanghaloka, the Centre of Friends of Buddhism – or in Polish, Osrodek Przyjaciol Buddyzmu. Work on the centre had continued up to the very last minute of the day of the opening ceremony. As the deadline approached there was that feeling of planning a party but not knowing how many people would show up. And, being totally absorbed in preparations, it was something of a surprise when the first visitors started to turn up!

We were very fortunate in that we had much-needed help on the day of the opening from friends from Birmingham (UK) - Karunabandhu, Alokavira, Padmakumara and Roy. A Sangha friend Kasia, decorated the whole place beautifully and, suddenly, the Centre was revealed in all its glory. Seeing the Centre for the first time was as much a surprise for us as for our visitors because it had been covered up in protective plastic sheets and still looked more like a building site than a Buddhist Centre. Although still not completely finished, Sanghaloka looked beautiful, warm and inviting with its wood features and red

and orange colour scheme. The opening ceremony itself couldn't have gone better. Forty or so people came, some from near and far in Poland as well as from England, Germany, France and Hungary. It was strange and lovely to see them all there. And it was heart-warming and inspiring to see so many Order Members' kesas there.

Most importantly, Bhante Sangharakshita was there to cut the ribbon and launch the new Centre. He brought to the occasion the appropriate sense of importance – a reminder that another public Centre being opened enabled the Dharma to be communicated to more people.

After this, Nityabandhu gave a slideshow of the building of Sanghaloka. It felt significant to share with others the history of the birth of the new Centre. Bhante spoke about his involvement with the new Centre as well as his personal connection with Nityabandhu. He also said that the opening of Sanghaloka stirred up memories for him of the opening of the very first FWBO Centre in Monmouth Street, London, back in 1967.

In talking about the name 'Sanghaloka', he said that 'loka' also meant 'home' as well as realm or world. He placed 'sangha' very much in its context of the Three Jewels and talked about their interconnectedness. He also mentioned that a hundred years ago, Monmouth Street also had numerous second-hand clothes shops! (There are many of them in Krakow, and in its previous incarnation, Sanghaloka was itself a second-hand clothes shop).

After Bhante spoke, we had a ritual to enshrine in the wall some precious objects given by Bhante. Then we had the Dedication Ceremony in Polish, after which there was a surprise trumpet recital of 'Wonderful World' by Louis Armstrong. The evening ended with the enjoyment of tea and Polish cakes. Three days after the opening ceremony, we held our fifth Polish retreat. It almost didn't happen as our original venue had been flooded so a last minute search for an alternative venue ensued. Fortunately we headed off to the Polish countryside just a day later than planned for a week's retreat with half a dozen or so others.

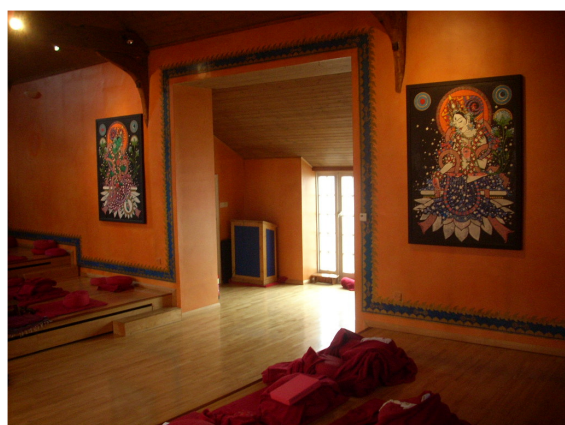
Now we're back and trying to rest and prepare ourselves for the next phase - opening the doors of Sanghaloka to the public! As I mentioned earlier, the centre isn't completely finished and we hope we have enough money to install heating before the Polish winter gets under way. If anyone wishes to contribute by making a donation, it would be very much appreciated. Check our new online fundraising page at www.justgiving.com/sanghaloka or [write to us](mailto:kontakt@buddyzm.info.pl) at kontakt@buddyzm.info.pl.

The main thing is that it seems there is genuine interest in Buddhism and meditation here in Poland so we will do our best to share what we know and love with whoever comes through the door. Probably small-scale to start with, then who knows

There's already a Polish version of the FWBO's main website – check <http://buddyzm.info.pl> And some photos are online at www.flickr.com/photos/sanghaloka.

Tuesday, September 30, 2008

'Garland of Mantras' event raises £3,500 for Padmaloka paintings



Padmaloka, the FWBO's retreat centre for men, in Norfolk UK, recently completed their first-ever 'Garland of Mantras' weekend retreat, during which they raised over £3,500 for their **Aloka paintings fund**.

Aryapala, Padmaloka's manager, reports -

"I'm delighted to tell you we completed the 24-hour chanting on our Garland of Mantras weekend retreat, with a sort of shift system beginning at midday on Saturday and going non-stop until midday on Sunday.

"A BIG THANK YOU! to all who contributed to this weekend. We collectively raised over £3,500 and our plan is to commission the next paintings in the series as we now have sufficient funds. Our vision is to fill our shrine room with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

"To this end we have commissioned Aloka to produce a series of large paintings – already we have

Padmasambhava, Vajrasattva, White Tara, and Green Tara. Aloka 's paintings are a unique and valuable contribution to the imaginative life of a modern Buddhist. While he is still able to produce art we want to allow him to fill the walls of the shrine room with images so that the whole room becomes the shrine. "

There's a video snippet of some of the event on Aryapala's [Facebook page](#); fans of Padmaloka (www.padmalo.org.uk) might also like to join their [Facebook group](#).

Coming next in the series of paintings is a large Amitabha – 6' by 12'.

About us:

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) www.fwbo.org was founded in 1967 by Sangharakshita.

It is now an international movement with activities in more than 20 countries, including India, where it is known as the TBMSG, the 'Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana'.

At its heart is the Western Buddhist Order, a community of over 1,500 ordained men and women of all ages and from all walks of life, united by their common commitment to the Three Jewels of Buddhism.

The FWBO/TBMSG is a non-sectarian Buddhist movement which seeks promote the practice of Buddhism in a form appropriate to the modern world.

FWBO News

FWBO News aims to present a selection of stories illustrating some of what is going on across our network of centres, businesses, communities, arts events, and individual projects.

Many stories are linked to other websites, to access these please visit www.fwbo-news.org and connect from there.

Previous posts by topic:

Africa, Ambedkar, Arts, Aryaloka, Australia, BBC, Berlin, Birmingham, Bodh Gaya, Breathworks, Brighton, Bristol, Buddhafield, Cambridge, Canada, Cardiff, Carers retreats, Children, China, Clear Vision, Croydon, Death, Delhi, Dhammakranti, Dharmaduta, Dublin, Education, Engaged Buddhism, France, Fundraising, Germany, Health, Holland, Hungary, India, INEB, Interbuddhist, Interfaith, Ireland, Jobs, Johannesburg, Karuna, Kerala, LBC, Malaysia, Manchester, Meditation, Mumbai, Nagpur, Nepal, New Zealand, Newcastle, North London, Nottingham, NVC, Obituaries, Ordinations, Parents, Paris, Pilgrimage, Poland, Preceptors, Prisons, Radio, Right Livelihood, San Francisco, Sangharakshita, Schools, Scotland, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudarshanaloka, Sweden, Taraloka, TBMSG, Tiratanaloka, USA, Veganism, Vegetarianism, Video, Wildmind, Windhorse, Women, Yatras, Youth...

Also including:

FWBO Jobs, Feature articles, FWBO Resources, email subscriptions, search facilities, and extensive links.

More News inside.....

Buddhafield East celebrates best-ever year

“Flags flew, people danced and meditated, Padmavajra gave three amazing talks and 120 of us had a wonderful time in the Suffolk countryside over the August Bank Holiday weekend. This was our fifth year and fourth gathering, and was very special for me....



New Ordinations There's been over 50 ordinations into the Western Buddhist Order in the past few months. Details inside.

Date for your diary: FWBO International Urban Retreat

June 2009 will see the first ever International Urban retreat run by the FWBO. Urban retreats have been pioneered at a few FWBO centres over the past few years, and have proven both popular and effective.

The dates – set after consultation with FWBO Centres worldwide - are **20-27th June 2009**.

All readers of FWBO News world-wide are welcome to take part, whether or not they are near an FWBO Centre.

