



F.W.B.O.

Newsletter 22



FWBO NEWSLETTER 22 Spring 1974

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The FWBO has begun to expand in recent months. The last few ordinations have thrown up a new crop of strong energetic Order members, many of whom are now working almost full time for the Friends. There is a movement apparent which is taking an increasingly tangible form.

The new editor hopes to echo this growth by slowly but surely making the style in which the Newsletter is written one of increasing objectivity, and allowing space for clarity of vision to flower.

Reports will now be printed anonymously (though all contributors are named at the bottom of this page). Anything of a more personal or subjective nature will be signed.

It is difficult for us to know how much of the spirit of the movement is conveyed by the Newsletter. Please let us know how you find this issue.

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THE ARCHWAY CENTRE

Many people who receive this Newsletter have never seen the Archway Centre, and perhaps this reflects in the perspective they have of the Friends as a whole. The story after leaving the basement of Sakura, the shop in Central London, was one of homelessness and hired rooms, until our present building in North London was let to us by Camden Council. We only have the use of it until it is demolished along with the surrounding streets; its bright yellow facade stands among derelict and decaying terraces which form an island into which the 'Highgate New Town' development is slowly eating.

The building itself was originally a dairy when the area was still agricultural, and consists of two rooms, one up and one down, each of about a thousand square feet. The upstairs room is the shrine room with white stone walls, room for fifty meditators, and a powerfully peaceful atmosphere centred on the large and ornate three tiered shrine. Downstairs there is an office, refreshment bar, bookshop, and easy chairs. Outside is the caravan where the caretaker and Basho the cat live.

The people who live in the area around the centre are mostly council tenants, who are being replaced, as they are rehoused, by younger people who have houses on short term lets from a housing association or who are squatters - the change has not been without its resentments or conflicts. Many of the Order members taking classes and running the Centre, and Friends who come to it, have found cheap and convenient accommodation in the immediate vicinity, but seem to be on very good terms with their neighbours. There is a loose knit but committed community formed by the residents of these houses and they supply the basis of the energy of our work here. The Centre is not only 'alive' during the programmed classes, rather there is someone here seven days a week, meditating, secretarying, or talking about Buddhism.

There is probably little more than twelve months' life left in this building, may be even less, so we are already looking for a new London centre. It is to be hoped that this will not be located in so decayed an area for this must discourage some people as well as producing a depressing surrounding for what should be elevating work. Our next centre needs to be relatively permanent and in a far more desirable area, and will therefore be much more expensive.

SUNDAY BEGINNERS' MEDITATION CLASS

When the idea of an extra beginners' class on Sunday was conceived it was hoped that it might attract a type of person different from the majority of Friends currently attending classes. On the whole people using the Archway Centre tend to be between 20 and 30 with an educated background and/or tend to have had involvement at some time with the drug scene. Consequently a stereotype Friend is emerging. Obviously this is not a healthy situation for a movement intent upon spiritual growth; it is limited, narrow and potentially incestuous.

The introduction of a class at 5.30pm on Sunday afternoon was partly an attempt to break away from this. It was deliberately set at a time which would be convenient for people who perhaps for reasons of work, might genuinely be unable to attend the Wednesday evening class, or who might not wish to run straight from an office to a shrine room. Five hundred leaflets were printed and these were distributed at the height of the rush hour outside three local tube stations for a few days preceding the first class. As a result about fifteen people turned up nearly all of whom had had no previous contact with the FWBO. Unfortunately, however, three months later, none who attended the first class has been seen for some time and although enjoying a different ambiance it seems to have slipped into a similar pattern to the Wednesday class with regard to turnover and type.

The class fulfils a role within the framework of the general programme, but not that which we had hoped. The problem we started with is still there.

TUESDAY EVENING CLASS

Attendance on Tuesday evenings for the latter part of 1973 slowly dwindled to almost nil and so an effort was made to rekindle enthusiasm. The old formula of double meditation and puja was replaced by meditation, study and puja. The main point of the change was to have an evening where "Friends could meet and get to know the Order". In a sense the class is a step upwards from the beginners' meditation classes and the beginners' courses. It's orientated more towards people who have been in regular attendance for perhaps two to three months and feel the need to extend their contact with the movement a little further. Three study groups have been formed and the three texts currently being studied are the Dhammapada, the Precepts of the Gurus, and Bodhicaryavatara of Santideva.

DAY SESSHINS

Originally to be held once a fortnight, now once a month, these days of intensive meditation are becoming part of the regular pattern of events at the Archway Centre. Of the six or so that have been held so far, the number of people attending has varied between four and ten and the atmosphere from mildly alienated to abounding with metta.

The day begins at 10.00am and continues with forty minute sittings alternating with twenty minutes of walking and chanting until 10.00pm. A meal is served and eaten with varying degrees of ceremony in the shrine room - a very good way to appreciate food - followed by a rather dead period when everyone is struggling to keep awake. However energies draw together again and when more people come in at 7.00pm for the regular evening meditation the intensity almost visibly heightens. Darkness has by now fallen and all the candles on the shrine are lit, the chanting seems richer and fuller so that the puja is a very powerful experience, a chance to express the energy which has accumulated during the day.

The Sesshins have on the whole been very beneficial. However, people who are rather withdrawn in the first place tend to be attracted to them and to emphasise that withdrawal. It would be better if people who have had little experience of meditation or who have not been to a retreat did not come until they had seen a bit more of their own capacities. It is no use simply sitting through the day as a test of virility, you'll only end up with an aching head - by one who knows.

COMMUNICATION EXERCISES

The once monthly communication exercises held at the centre on Sundays have been very successfully run by Dhammadinna and will be extended after May under the guidance of Padmaraja. The numbers attending have varied from eight to twenty six over the last four sessions and the March session with twenty six was certainly the most vigorous and noisy afternoon of them all. On the whole they seem to attract people who have not previously been to the Centre and many stay for the beginners meditation class which follows shortly after.

OPEN FORUM

An open forum was held of 29th April at the Archway Centre. The purpose was to encourage discussion of the way in which the F.W.B.O. is now developing, especially from the view point of non-Order members. It was organised by Lorna Casey and attended by four order members and about fifteen Friends most of whom felt that there were things that could be changed and improved. Although the meeting did not reach any specific conclusions, it pointed out the need for further discussion on several broad topics. These were:-

The relationship between order members and friends, especially newcomers: some people felt that the kesa was seen as a barrier by newcomers who were not given any explanation of the significance of ordination and did not know how they should approach an order member. Some order members did little to overcome this difficulty and seemed almost to be hiding behind their kesa. Perhaps just more friendliness is needed? Should more be said about the W.B.O. and the F.W.B.O. at beginner's classes?

The base of activities of the F.W.B.O.: many people have needs and problems which are basically psychological and might be best helped by activities quite different to those presently available. Should the F.W.B.O. engage in more direct therapeutic work or should it help people to find the structure that would help them most amongst other organizations more experienced in this? A direct suggestion was that we should become better informed about other organizations, and perhaps maintain a notice board display to guide people in exploring these groups. The F.W.B.O. can never be all things to all people.

Entering a spiritual path: most people first come to the F.W.B.O. because they are looking for answers to personal problems, or simply to find out about meditation. The transition from this to an awareness of Buddhist teaching and the adoption of a spiritual path is not made very easy. The jump from a beginner's class to a more advanced group is perhaps too large. The course in Buddhism requires a commitment of purpose and money which can be a barrier, and a gentler path is not provided. Can some basic Buddhist teaching, other than Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures, be worked into beginner's classes in a way which will not frighten people off?

Involvement of friends in F.W.B.O. activities: how can the positive energy of friends be best developed and used by the F.W.B.O.? How to encourage a sense of involvement?

It was decided that further open forum meetings should be held to explore these questions more deeply. A channel is needed by which negative feelings and criticism can be brought into the open and turned to a positive and constructive end. The success of this first forum shows that non-Order members have a contribution to make in shaping the future of the F.W.B.O.

Since the Forum it has been decided to hold a similar meeting approximately once a month on a Saturday afternoon to air any views. (The next one will be on 8 June at 2.30pm)

MONDAY COURSE

The second of these introductory courses has just been completed. It consisted of twelve weekly meetings of approximately three hours duration. The first part of the evening is devoted to a period of meditation - either the mindfulness of breathing or the development of loving-kindness. Following this there is a talk on an aspect of Buddhist teaching. This attempts to give a grounding in the traditional formulations and some idea of the history and development of the Dharma. The evening concludes with a short talk on a feature of Buddhist symbolism - the significance of the shrine and the objects on it, the main Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and the stupa (etc.) - followed by the sevenfold puja. We thus attempt to provide a reasonably balanced evening which does not over or under emphasise any particular facet of Buddhism.

After the second week, a weekend retreat was held in the Surrey countryside involving meditation, communication exercises and puja. We had quite a heated debate on the subject of devotional exercises and ritual in general.

A feature of this course was a very lively ongoing discussion throughout the three months. People were constantly testing what was presented of Buddhism, trying to match it with their experience and with other systems of development. The course was not something which simply took place on Monday nights: the discussion continued throughout the week. Some of those who were on this course have decided to continue in a study group with a more searching look at Buddhism.

A new course will be starting on May 20, and the following one on September 30.

YOGA

Yoga continues to be an integral part of the general FWBO programme. There are two classes each week at Aryatara and one at Archway. All classes are taken by Order members who have trained according to the system of Sri Iyengar.

KARATE

Each Thursday evening at the Archway Centre the Karate-do class under the leadership of Sensai Wakatada continues. It is in the Mushindo style, which is an Okinawan tradition.

THREE DAY FESTIVAL

A three day festival was held at Archway on Saturday, Sunday and Monday 6, 7, & 8 April celebrating on successive days the foundation of the FWBO, the foundation of the Order, and the birth of the Buddha. Each of the three days had a different programme which produced its own distinctive atmosphere. Throughout the festival there was an abundance of food, flowers and incense, together with meditation, chanting and friendly conversation. On Saturday Vangisa gave a talk about the FWBO, summarising the development of the movement from the days of Sakura up until the present and then setting it in its cosmic perspective! The foundation of the Order, celebrated on the following day, was a specifically 'Order' occasion, which took place in the shrine room amidst a number of different shrines dedicated to various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; towards the evening the Centre was open again to Friends. The accent of the Monday festivity was on children and included a karate class and a pantomime about the Buddha's early life, which was followed by ice cream and trifle. The entire festival was then concluded, as each of the two previous days had been, with an elaborate puja which included many individual offerings.

WESAK CELEBRATIONS AT ARCHWAY

The anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment began quietly with a meeting of Order members and mitras. In the afternoon there was a period of extended chanting incorporating visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The day proceeded with supper, meditation, and a talk on the significance of Wesak by Nagabodhi, and concluded with an elaborate festive puja. About forty people attended what proved to be a very relaxed and friendly celebration.

FEBRUARY RETREATS

In early February a retreat was held at Mamaki's home in South London primarily for Friends from Scotland and several Dutch people who do Gestalt Therapy work with Nel in't Feld in Rotterdam. Ven. Sangharakshita attended this retreat in order to enlarge upon his series of tape-recorded lectures on the Noble Eightfold Path. There was a lot of emphasis on action, on having faith in oneself and one's aims and acting accordingly, almost a military ideal, not allowing oneself to be deflected by doubt. This gave a specific flavour to the retreat; it was not a quiet meditative retreat - although there were several hours of daily meditation as part of the programme - rather, there was an atmosphere of energy and activity. The people attending the retreat had a personal solidity and strength of growth that made the week a very invigorating experience. It was also good to be in Mamaki's house, tall and well built, and Ven. Sangharakshita's presence as usual dissolved complications and brought peace and positivity to troubled minds.

The following week two more retreats were held: one for women in Cambridge and one for men in Tittleshall. Ven. Sangharakshita was present at the latter. As in the previous week he discussed points arising from his lectures. The most important point of general interest to emerge from these sessions was that concerning the paths of development: that of irregular steps, that of regular steps, and that of no steps. On the irregular path, the individual attains states in meditation that are relatively advanced but they soon fade, he can hop up and down the lower positive nidanas, but none can be perfected until the previous one has been. V. Sangharakshita said that most people in the West seem to start in this way, but sooner or later if they are to make real progress, they have to come back to the path of regular steps. On this path one begins at the beginning with the maintaining of the precepts, practising the Noble Eightfold Path as a discipline, and the perfection of the first few positive nidanas. Progress is then step by step, building on a firm and wide foundation. Ven. Sangharakshita says he may or may not say something of the path of no steps in the future.

* * *

"There is no sad departure for true friends going their own way.
To forget them is the only sadness."

HUI NENG SEMINAR

In the grey coldness of March, ten of us gathered at the Old Rectory in Tittleshall for a study seminar of ten days duration. Ven. Sangharakshita arrived each morning at 10am from Brandon and we settled in to our four hours of study. After this we worked (rather desultorily) and cooked and ate (with eagerness) finishing at 9.30pm with a meditation and puja.

So to the study itself: The text we were dealing with was the Platform Sutra of Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of the Ch'an or Zen School, itself the foremost text of that school. We would read aloud a paragraph each, and Ven. Sangharakshita would explain, interpret or expand any points that might arise.

The point that arose most clearly from our study was that one has to be extremely careful when reading a text to understand the context in which it was spoken. Hui Neng's position could be summed up in the words "our self nature is pure by nature, and by making right use of it we can reach Buddhahood directly". However it seems that most of the people he was speaking to had studied sutras for years, meditated deeply, or were scholars or literati. In other words they had a background of training of a lengthy and intensive kind. His words acted as the final catalyst in a process of realisation. They needed to be told to look within, while most people in our movement could do with a spell of looking without.

It emerged quite clearly that from Hui Neng's point of view, Zen could not be seen as something quite distinct from the mainstream of Buddhist tradition. He uses such formulae as the Threefold Way of Morality, Meditation and Wisdom which derives from the Pali Canon. He was originally set on the path by hearing the Diamond Sutra, and is obviously familiar with other well known Mahayanan texts such as the Lankavatara and Vimilakirti Nirveda Sutra, so there is no suggestion that he discarded all scriptures. (In this context the Zen phrase "no dependence on words or scriptures" seems to have been badly misunderstood. This does not mean that we must not use them, but simply that we cannot use them as a substitute for the ultimate face to face experience of reality. This then is another example of the prevalent confusion of the Absolute and the Relative planes of discourse - people persist in talking sub specie aeternitas when they can hardly tie their own shoe laces.)

Another popular misconception which was scotched concerned the famed 'transmission'. Ven. Sangharakshita explained that nothing was really transmitted or handed across. Spiritual enlightenment is an individual affair. Rather the teacher acknowledges the disciple's understanding. In effect he says "Yes, you've got it."

This was a characteristic of the whole seminar, the exposure of a number of popular fallacies of a pseudoliberal nature which have crept into the movement; for instance the belief that one does not need, or should not accept help, that all are equal (that no one is more developed or in any way better than anyone else), the premature assumption of nonduality (since we are all Buddhas anyway there is no need to do anything about ourselves), the tendency to crave a tangible 'experience' (a scream, a freak out, etc) in neglect of building up a solid foundation, and a courting of the bubbly, frothy 'high'. These are a few of the michadhittis or wrong views which are floating around and which one must be careful not to be snared by.

The main feeling of the seminar was that of getting back to basics, to the path of regular steps, getting the ordinary practical level sorted out. The text itself was a means of discussing the practical necessities which now confront us.

A recording was made of the seminar and a transcript is being prepared for publication.

THE EASTER RETREAT AT TITLLESHALL

During the sixteen day Easter retreat the Stupa visualisation practice became pivotal for all our other practice. In terms of actual time it only occupied one hour a day - other meditation practices took up some four to five hours a day.

Stupa visualisation is an excellent preliminary practice as it is intended to release, stimulate and purify psycho-spiritual energy. Most of us find it extremely difficult to get into any meditation practice due to a severe shortage of the right sort of readily available energy.

The practice itself involves the visualisation of the elements Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Aether/Consciousness, as a yellow cube, white sphere, red cone, green hemisphere, and flaming jewel, at various centres in the body. The elements are seen as successive stages in the refining of psycho-spiritual energy rather than their gross material counterparts in the physical world. They are referred to as mahabhutas - mahabhuta literally means 'great primary element' - but it can also mean 'great ghost' or 'great magical transformation'.

* * *

The retreat took place at the Old Rectory, Tittleshall from Friday 5 April until Sunday 21 April led by Devaraja and organised by Aryamitra. Other Order members present were Nagabodhi and Sulocana; Ananda and Manjuvajra came for a few days each.

The first three days were anniversaries of the Buddha's birthday, the founding of the Friends, and the founding of the Western Buddhist Order. So it was an auspicious time to start a retreat.

During the days that followed we rose at six thirty and had three hours of meditation which involved Mindfulness of Breathing and Just Sitting. Then in the middle of the day there was Stupa Visualisation. In the afternoon the meditation practice was principally the Metta Bhavana. After supper we listened to tapes of Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures, the first series being the Noble Eightfold Path and the second on aspects of the Tantra. Lastly was the puja which included readings which we all did in turn from the Surangama Sutra, a source of great inspiration; and also readings by Nagabodhi from the 'Legend of the Great Stupa.'

In the last two or three days, time was spent preparing offerings for the Stupa ceremony in which we all took an active part, involving making offerings to a stupa cake, repeating the readings, visualising Avalokiteshvara, and chanting his mantra, while circling the prayer flag and the rest of the grounds, making offerings with water. It was a creative, benign and joyful ceremony, summing up the feeling tone of the whole retreat, in tune with the spring time around and within us.

* * *

Every day at noon at the heart of the retreat, Devaraja led us through the stupa visualisation practice... Imagine that the drab surroundings of the city have disappeared. We see before us, welcoming under a clear blue sky, the Old Rectory.

'There appears a yellow cube, symbol of the element Earth'. Over a dozen people begin to build up the retreat on strong foundations.

'Everyone meditates, we all take turns in cooking. Aryamitra's painless persuasions get us all cleaning, painting and chopping wood. Graham Rice shows selfless devotion to the sewers.

'A white sphere, symbol of the water element'. Slowly we begin to loosen up. On a physical level, Aryamitra takes long sessions of yoga in which Sharon proves to have a stronger back than anyone. The

meditations are varied, one day we do five different practices. Emotional blocks are freed. There are several tearful meditations and several joyful ones. There is one Metta Bhavana sitting in which Devaraja struggles valiantly to guide us while he, and everyone else is immersed in a rising tide of laughter which threatens to pull us off our cushions.

'A red cone, symbol of Fire'. We move from listening to the Eightfold Path lectures onto the Tantric series. People grow stronger day by day. Nagabodhi becomes more like the dragon of his name. Devaraja harangues us for being too polite in the communication exercises. He talks about the Tantric offerings of parts of the human body as demonstrations of how communication should be authentic, "free, from your guts". There is much talk of doing karate. Engulfed in angry energy I stomp off into the fields to scream defiant mantras at the looming shapes of military aircraft which growl overhead. It is only the tiredness of too many late nights which holds us back.

'A green saucer, symbol of Air'. Relationships become closer, warmer. We seem to grow together, until a feeling which transcends individuals appears and in the common work of building our stupa, we move onto a more spiritual growth. However, so good is the feeling that when newcomers arrive, it is hard not to react negatively in a jealous bid to preserve the delicate balance that has been created. In future it might be worth closing retreats to newcomers after the first week.

'A flaming jewel, consciousness'. In the early part of the retreat, what Graham called the 'stench of mindfulness' had not arisen. Indeed, several of the periods of silence had been abandoned by an 'unspoken agreement'. This did at least prevent us from forcing things, an alienated grinding down of ourselves in the name of concentration. Devaraja just pointed to the infinite blue sky, and gave us the space and freedom to grow at our own pace. Thus we gradually developed a middle way: mindful talk, mindful spontaneity - the crowning element of our stupa.

This mindfulness reaches its peak on the last weekend with the ritual recitation of the 'Legend of the Great Stupa'. All the traditional offerings described are made to the stupa as well as our own private offerings. Pamela bakes a beautiful stupa cake for the occasion.

'The radiance from the jewel shines in all directions'. After the recitation and a puja we visualise Avalokitesvara, and go to bed with his mantra still sounding in our hearts. We rise the next day, repeat the visualisation and then walk round the grounds of the Rectory,

sprinkling water as a blessing and dedication. We go by the prayer flag set up in the garden - stopping to sprinkle the eight goslings triumphantly hatched by the goose after five weeks (an example of what the 'just sitting' practice can achieve), past the new born white kid but leaving the six new kittens in peace.

And so it is time to go. The last goodbyes are said. Then slowly the whole retreat dissolves back into the infinite blue sky.

Tony McMahan

THE KALYANA MITRA SYSTEM

On a bright Friday in March, I sat between Vajradaka and Subhuti, whilst Bhante (Ven. Sangharakshita) explained the significance of the Kalyana Mitra ceremony which he was about to perform. It marked, he said, a historic moment in the development of the F.W.B.O. Up til now all those people who were considering ordination have had close personal contact with Bhante. As the movement grows this will obviously be less possible. To cover this deficiency someone who is considering ordination will now ask two Order members to become his kalyana mitras or 'spiritual friends'. The prospective ordinand will be known as a mitra.

The kalyana mitra's main function will be to keep in contact with their mitra. As long as this contact with the Sangha, with the Dharma is maintained, spiritual progress is possible. There are two Order members to enable a balance of personality to be struck and to allow for periods when one of them may be unavailable.

This system is an ancient one in Buddhism. It demonstrates the emphasis Buddhism places on positive, dynamic friendship. This friendship, the kalyana mitra relationship, may begin on a quite mundane level, but it can deepen continuously, until at last, it may become an enlightened friendship. Thus the Buddha is sometimes described as the ultimate kalyana mitra.

Having explained the significance of the system, Bhante chanted blessings for the three of us and we concluded with a three fold shout of "Sadhu".

For a while the system may be hampered by the shortage of Order members ready and able to undertake such a commitment. However, so far there are some eight mitras, who hopefully as the F.W.B.O. grows ever faster, will one day become kalyana mitras in their turn. In this way the

chain of the Dharma which stretches from the Buddha unbroken, through Bhante to the Order, may be extended still further.

RECENT ORDINATIONS

On February 13 during the retreat held at Mamaki's house, Mary Rawnsley was given her private ordination. The following evening at Aryatara her public ordination was performed by Ven. Sangharakshita in the presence of those on the retreat and the Order. Mary is now called Sulochana; 'Lochana' is the consort of Akshobya, and is often called Lady of the Buddha Eye. It means she who sees the truth, or sees with wisdom. 'Su' means beautiful. Ven. Sangharakshita said that this name had many meanings: she who sees the truth beautifully, the beautiful one who sees the truth or the one with beautiful eyes.

Gerald Stanton's ordination took place during the last weekend of the Men's Retreat. Gerald is now called Kassapa. Kassapa was one of the Buddha's disciples, well known for his rigorous maintaining and upholding of the precepts. He had previously been a fire worshipper and was noted for his asceticism.

ORDER MEMBERS OUT AND ABOUT

Earlier this year Ashvajit visited two Friends, Gary & Anna Stoloff, formerly regulars at the Archway Centre, now living on a farm in Cardiganshire. A group has slowly been forming around them which meets weekly for meditation and discussion. Ashvajit gave two talks and led some lively discussion together with meditation sessions. A week's retreat has since been held at the farm for members of the group and ten people from Archway.

He also visited the Northampton Buddhist Society on the anniversary of the Buddha's birth and gave a talk.

Subhuti has given talks at the Thames Polytechnic, Woolwich, as part of an 'alternative education programme' run by students who had occupied the college, at the London School of Non-Violence - a discussion group which meets in the crypt of St. Martin's in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, and at the Olcott Centre, a group of young people meeting at the Theosophical Society. The talks gave an introductory outline of Buddhism as a path for the development of the individual. Subhuti was also interviewed on Capitol Radio, a London commercial station and answered questions phoned in by listeners. In February he led a day retreat at the Jungian Centre for Personality Development in Hampstead.

Marichi and Lokamitra have each been on a solitary retreat for one month, Marichi in a caravan in Wales and Lokamitra in a tent in Gloucestershire.

A WINTER RETREAT

Since mid-March when I returned to London having just spent the previous six months in retreat, I have been asked on many occasions to describe what it was like and to answer the questions; "How did you manage?", "Did you mind being alone?", "Did you have any breakthroughs?", and "What did you do for sex?"; and sometimes there has been a reluctance, a certain unwillingness to glance back over the shoulder at a fast receding landscape when it is in the journey ahead where the adventure now lies, but a few words, left like the gipsy scratches on some village gate, might be of interest to others who will shortly be passing the same way.

The cottage, which I was fortunate in acquiring free of rent, was situated on the southern slopes of the Applecross peninsula in West Scotland, and overlooked Loth Carron, the Kintail Mountains and parts of Skye. It was also very isolated, my nearest neighbours being five heather covered miles away. On moving in, the buildings, which was a little dilapidated as a result of standing empty for thirty years, (hence no rent), was given a few days of practical attention. The windows were covered with polythene sheeting. The doors, which had been removed to prevent sheep trapping themselves, were rehung, the roof fixed for leaks, and a sheep's carcass, minus the horned skull which had the honour of being impaled on a nail over the fireplace, was scooped into the fresh air. All furniture, table, desk, armchair, bed and shelving had to be constructed out of driftwood and fish boxes found on the shore. The outcome of all this activity was two habitable rooms, one above the other, which were secured against the winter gales to come and which would prove to be the worst in the area for three hundred years. The upstairs room was used exclusively as a shrine room, while the one downstairs was for living and sleeping. Within a couple of weeks of moving in I felt completely at home and had established a routine which was to vary little for the remainder of the six month period.

I would awake at around first light and then meditate for a couple of hours. Afterwards, a light breakfast followed by the daily task of wood gathering. Because of the winter conditions it was necessary to keep the fire going most of the time and this meant one sackful of sawn logs per day. Fortunately there were a few wind blown trees in the immediate area which supplied all that was needed.

The main meal of the day, cooked on the open fire, was eaten at mid-

day and was generally based around crushed wheat, lentils and onions; enough being prepared for a fry up later in the evening.

After some weeks it was discovered that I had lost one and a half stones in weight and so potatoes were added. Vitamin tablets were taken as a precautionary measure about once a week throughout the retreat. Judging by the resulting feeling of health and well-being, this inexpensive diet served very well. Water was collected from a crystal clear stream a few yards from the cottage and it was here that the washing up was also done.

Clattering pans in icy pool,
And speaking with a silent frog,
Warming hands in embers glow,
Remembering where I left the soap.

The afternoon would be spent reading and studying the teachings of Buddhism, or, if the weather were fine, going for long rambles in the hills or along the rocky shore, and seeing at every turn evidence of the abundant wild life of the region: deer, seals, an eagle or two, fox and weasel and once, high on a wind swept ridge, a pair of snow white ptarmigan.

And then the evening; sitting in front of a blazing fire and praising Prometheus, or reading the poets by the soft light of the storm lantern and pondering deep thoughts with Shelley. And so to the evening meditation and puja.

Come, come, ye spirits of the earth,
All are invited.

And the weeks flew by, from summer, through winter and into spring. Every third or fourth week I would go over the hills to the nearest shop which was ten miles away and buy a few provisions and also collect any mail. It was on these occasions that I would generally go and stay the night with two longstanding friends who acted as my guardian angels throughout the retreat and whose steaming baths, well provisioned table and violent telly severely contrasted with the peace to be found in the little cottage. There was solitude but no sense of aloneness for the feeling of Sangha was strong. There was no sudden breakthrough either but I'm sure the rock was given a few more hearty blows. To embark upon such a retreat without the discipline of a regular practice of meditation would, I feel, serve little purpose because there is a very real danger of slipping into a happy but unprofitable limbo. And what did I do for sex? - What did the light do when the lamp was removed?

Many thanks to all who wrote to me, - your letters were very much appreciated.

Buddhadasa

FWBO SURREY, ARYATARA COMMUNITY

WEDNESDAY CLASS

For the past ten weeks Ananda has been giving the beginners meditation and study class at the community. This class has now built up a very sincere and serious nucleus of about twelve people, although newcomers come along still in response to local publicity and personal recommendation. It has been very gratifying to see the response and individual growth taking place in those who have been coming along consistently: indeed several members of the class have been to at least one retreat and others participated in a committee to organize our Wesak festival.

The programme begins at 7.30 p.m. with a reading from an appropriate text. This is followed by one of the four traditional practices taught by the Friends: Just sitting, mindfulness of breathing, metta bhavana or one of the elementary visualisations. The meditation is followed by tea and a short space for questions or difficulties experienced in the course of the practice after which the study period takes place. The text currently being used is Hakuin's beautiful poem the 'Song of Meditation' in the Leggett translation. This is a very suitable work for general study and it very often happens that problems that occur in work or home situations, or in the context of personal relationship are brought into the discussion and related to an image or symbol in the poem. Thus the perennial or intensely personal problems of leaving home, of masculinity and femininity, roles in society, of coping with aggression, loneliness, frustration or boredom with work, of meditation at home, of divided or squandered energies, of bringing up children, and of applying experiences in meditation to everyday life - all these aspects of Buddhist teaching have been discussed in some depth in the course of studying the text.

The programme concludes with a puja recitation and mantra chanting for those who wish to take part in the more emotional (or devotional) aspects of Buddhist life.

COURSE ON BASIC BUDDHISM AT ARYATARA

On April 1, a basic course on Buddhism was begun at Aryatara, led by Mangala. The course is following a similar pattern to the previous courses at Archway and includes meditation, study and puja.

RETREATS

Three weekend retreats have taken place this year at the community. The first, at the beginning of March, was led by Mangala, the second in April, led by Jitari, and the third, led by Subhuti for the members of the study course at Archway. All these were small in numbers and contemplative in atmosphere, and a programme of events which has now come to be standard in the F.W.B.O. retreats was followed, including group meditation with instruction, discussion, taped lectures, work and puja.

BUDDHIST MARRIAGE

The third blessing of marriage to take place at Aryatara occurred on Saturday, February 16. It was between Devaraja and Mala, the Indian niece of (Freda Bedi) Sister Karma Khechog Palmo. The ceremony was conducted by Padmaraja, in the company of a large group of well-wishers. The shrine was beautifully decorated with flowers and after the reading of the three sutras, confetti and flowers were showered on the couple, accompanied by shouts of "Sadhu". After the ceremony Ven. Sangharakshita chanted some verses of blessing before the assembled company moved into the kitchen to enjoy the food.

PRINTING PRESS AT ARYATARA

Work has been steadily progressing over the Easter period with the setting up of a dark room for the production of litho printing plates. This has involved making a light-proof partition and door, installation and rewiring of electrical supplies and fitting a supply of running water.

Most of this work has now been completed, and within a few weeks time the service should be fully operational. While its main function will be to print F.W.B.O. publications - Ven. Sangharakshita's work, translations of texts, booklets on Buddhism, plus our newsletter and other publicity - the service will be available to spiritual groups and communities all over the country, and we will aim to provide a seven-day-a-week fast service of high quality offset printing at a cheaper rate than the average small commercial printer.

Further details of this service will appear in our next Newsletter.

WESAK

The programme began with a talk by Devaraja on the significance of the Wesak festival, during which he gave a clear account of the events in the Buddha's life leading up to the experience of Bodhi or Enlightenment. The talk concluded with the three images which the Buddha gave to indicate the 'feel' of the state of enlightenment:

Imagine that you have been carrying around an enormous load on your back for many hours along a long, hot, dusty road. Then suddenly you put it down - you no longer have to carry it - in fact it disappears altogether: enlightenment is something like this.

Again imagine that you are in very bad debt, and you think there is no possibility of ever paying off what you owe; then someone comes along and all of a sudden pays off the whole amount for you; enlightenment is like this too.

Then again, imagine you are in prison, locked in a tiny, dark, cold cell and you think you are condemned to be there for the rest of your life with no hope of escape. Then one morning you find the door is wide open and there is nothing to prevent you simply walking out to freedom; enlightenment is like that also.

After supper, a bonfire was lit and provided welcome warmth in the face of a chill breeze, and an impending rainstorm. There followed a showing of Ven. Sangharakshita's colour slides of India to the accompaniment of a commentary by Devaraja and taped music, and the programme ended with a puja.

ARYATARA WEEKLY PROGRAMME

MONDAY	Dharma Study Course	led by Mangala	7pm
	(twelve weekly classes: fee £12)		
TUESDAY	Hatha Yoga		
	led by Mangala	7.30pm	Charge 30p
WEDNESDAY	Meditation and Study Group		
	led by Ananda	7.30pm	No charge
THURSDAY	Hatha Yoga		
	led by Aryamitra	7.30pm	Charge 30p

Weekend retreats are held at the Community from time to time, please telephone 01-660 2542 for details of events. ARYATARA COMMUNITY, 3 Plough Lane, Purley.

FWBO GLASGOW

Vajradaka is now at the FWBO Centre in Glasgow for a stay of about six months. He follows Padmaraja and Chintamani who between them were there for about eight weeks. The main project in operation at the moment is the search for a larger, quieter, and more adaptable centre.

Wesak was celebrated by about fifteen people on a farm outside Glasgow. The day was quiet and intense, with the exception of an hour's improvised music in the open air.

Attendance at the Centre has diminished recently after a very busy couple of months, so the Friends who are active here at the moment are taking the opportunity to improve administration and the general brightening up of the premises. On Mondays Ramesh leads two yoga classes; on Tuesday there is meditation with a discussion or a taped lecture; on every third Wednesday there is one period of meditation (instead of the usual two) followed by a chanting session.

On 21 May we are holding an open forum on livelihood. This will be a discussion in which we hope to explore some of the problems of living and working creatively in the city.

At some point in the near future we shall be having an informal weekend of massage; there will be communication exercises at the end of May, and on 6 September we are starting a six week course on basic Buddhism (two nights a week, plus a weekend retreat: £15 inclusive). We have also published the first issue of the FWBO Glasgow Newsletter entitled 'Mitra'.

FWBO TITTLESHALL

Sulochana and her family have been joined at their large Old Rectory in Norfolk by Ratnapani and John Hunter. Shortly Jitari and Debie Lobstein will be taking their places in the community.

This year a study seminar, men's retreat, and two week Easter retreat were held at the Old Rectory most successfully.

FWBO CORNWALL

A little before Christmas last year Manjuvajra met Sue and Christine who have been teaching yoga in Truro and the surrounding area for a number of years. They and a number of their friends were interested in meditation and so a meeting, attended by fifteen or so people was arranged. It was decided that a regular Sunday meeting be held. After a few weeks some people had left, and others joined, but at present there is a hard core of seven and about ten people come each week.

Inspired by the ceremonies of the last evening of the Easter Retreat at Tittleshall, and coincidence of our Wednesday meetings with May Day, we performed a special Padmasambhava Puja. Representations of the five senses and the elements, the sun, moon, and universe, ambrosia, and the blood of hatred, craving, and ignorance were offered by those present.

However the major event in the life of the group has been the dedication of the shrine room, which was led by Ven. Sangharakshita on April 7, a most auspicious day being the birthday of the Western Buddhist Order. The shrine room and a fine Avalokiteshvara rupa have been made available for the group by Kay and Pete who live in the country about six miles from Truro.

On the day of the dedication we held a one day retreat. People came from as far as Plymouth. During the breaks between meditation, lectures and communication exercises, we sat sipping our afternoon tea in the sun watched over by a life size marble Buddha under a tree. At about seven we returned to the shrine room, which although large looked well filled by the twenty five or so people present. Ven. Sangharakshita spoke a few words about the puja and dedication, about the production through our own efforts of a place of retreat, of regeneration, and eventually a point of power, pushing as if by its own creative energy out into the darkness. Then followed the puja and dedication ceremony.

"Around this Mandala, this sacred spot,
May the lotus petals of purity open.
Around this Mandala, this sacred spot,
May the vajra-wall of determination extend,
Around this Mandala, this sacred spot,
May the flames that transmute Samsara into Nirvana arise."

FWBO NEW ZEALAND

There are two groups in New Zealand: one in Auckland, and one in Christchurch, both of which continue to function with a regular programme of activities. Ashvajit will be going there in June to take ordination classes. Later in October, for a three month period, Ven. Sangharakshita, Lokamitra and Mark Dunlop will be joining him.

FWBO EXETER

Upasika Karuna, after unsuccessful local advertising, has been approached by a friend of an Archway Friend. Four people now meet each week for a period of meditation followed by discussion of general Buddhist topics, and the group shows signs of expansion. The group meets on Thursdays at 7.30pm.

FWBO EALING

FWBO Ealing meets every Tuesday evening at 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, Woodville Road, Ealing. The group hopes to enlarge its ranks by holding a series of live lectures on the first Tuesday of each month. Three lectures have been arranged - one by Dhammadinna has already been delivered, Subhuti will speak on June 11 on 'The Dharma' and Mamaki on July 9 on 'The Sangha'.

At its first council meeting held on April 10, members were pleasantly surprised to receive a visit from the President, the Venerable Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita. The meeting, held at the home of Vangisa, was also attended by Subhuti representing the Archway Centre.

Weekly sessions are varied and interesting, and to date have included meditation with Metta Bhavana, walking and chanting and a recorded lecture by the President on the subject of awareness. Yoga and communication exercises are planned for future sessions.

The intention is to form an active and self-supporting nucleus meeting regularly in Ealing for meditation and study, and to work towards the establishment of a local full-time centre, operating in close harmony with Archway and Aryatara, and perhaps ultimately within a network of London Centres.

VENERABLE SANGHARAKSHITA IN FINLAND

From April 12th to 20th Ven. Sangharakshita paid a visit to the Finnish F.W.B.O. Centre in Helsinki. He was still having a 'half day retreat' until one o'clock every day, which was a good thing as the rest of the days became fully booked with private talks with individuals and newspaper interviews. Altogether Ven. Sangharakshita saw about thirty five people apart from Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri.

On Saturday April 13th there was a ceremony to dedicate the shrine room. The dedication puja was translated into Finnish and repeated in Finnish. The Tuesday and Wednesday classes were taken by Ven. Sangharakshita who talked about different meditation practices and Buddhist practices in general, such as mindfulness, dana and the precepts. He also explained the meaning of taking the Three Refuges and becoming a Buddhist. The Finnish friends were astonished at how easily they could understand Ven. Sangharakshita's English and the language was hardly any barrier to communication.

Sangharakshita was also taken to the countryside for a day to have a look at a small cottage for possible retreats.

The F.W.B.O. Centre is situated in the peninsula of 'old' Helsinki which is a central part of the city with short walks to the sea shores as well as to the book shops, museums, the main library, the concert halls and department stores. Ven. Sangharakshita with Vajrabodhi and Bodhishri managed, in spite of the exacting programme, to take several walks around Helsinki. Ven. Sangharakshita wanted especially to see the largest bookshops and to visit the national museum with the Finno-Ugrian department which includes Lapland.

The weather was excellent. Sunshine and blue sky every day. Yet it was a bit chilly. In the court yard of Bodhishri's apartment block where Ven. Sangharakshita stayed there was still a heap of snow and in the country he had a go on skis.

Ven. Sangharakshita's convincing presence, the beautiful dedication of the shrine, and the sudden increase in the number of people who crammed into the tiny shrine room, (as well as the shortage of cushions and cups and far too small a teapot) gave the guardians of the F.W.B.O. Helsinki an idea of an optimistic future.

DANA APPEAL

The Bodhisattva Path is the very heart of the Mahayana tradition and dana (giving) is the first perfection which the aspiring Bodhisattva must cultivate as an antidote to craving and grasping. The bodhisattva gives himself completely for the benefit of all other beings. The FWBO is a spiritual movement which aims to make available the knowledge of the Dharma and the spiritual fellowship of the Sangha to as many people as possible.

In Eastern Buddhist countries there is a tradition of giving which still flourishes, but unfortunately in the West our own traditions of giving have become unfashionable. Many people are eager to meditate, but if money is mentioned there is often little response. Just as one person aiming at enlightenment for himself needs money, so the FWBO, aiming at enlightenment for all, needs money to fulfill its function.

Our most essential requirement at present is a new London Centre. Our present one at Archway is due to be pulled down possibly within six months. Last time we had to find new premises, it took twelve months to find them and for six of those we were homeless. In other words we need as much money as possible as soon as possible.

DONATE A BOND

If you would like to buy one or two or more premium bonds in the name of the FWBO, please send them to the Treasurer at the Archway Centre.

COVENANTS

If you regularly donate, or would like to donate money regularly to the Friends, have you considered paying by covenant? By this one agrees to pay so much per week, month or year over a period of seven years, and the government adds to this almost half as much again as you donate. Thus if ten people agree to £1 per month each over a period of seven years, that totals £840. The government would make this up to approximately £1200. You lose nothing over and above that which you want to pay and the Friends would be a lot richer.

BOOKSHOP

Since September last year, an evergrowing and expanding bookshop has been established at the Archway Centre and a fully comprehensive booklist has been prepared including the following list of books, which have been particularly recommended by the Ven. Sangharakshita. The complete booklist is available on request.

Buddhism - Its Essence and Development	E Conze	.90p
Buddhism - A non-Theistic Religion	H Von Glasenapp	2.00p
Buddhist Meditation	E Conze	.85p
Buddhist Texts through the Ages	E Conze	.90p
Essence of Buddhism	D T Suzuki	1.50p
Foundations of Tibetan Meditation	Lama Govinda	1.70p
Jewel Ornament of Liberation	Sgampopa	
	Trans Guenther	1.75p
Middle Length Sayings Vols 1,2,3	each	2.25p
On Indian Mahayana Buddhism	D T Suzuki	1.30p
Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism	D T Suzuki	1.80p
Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines	Trans Conze	2.25p
Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom	E Conze	.63p
Shin Buddhism	D T Suzuki	1.00p
Some Sayings of the Buddha	Woodward	1.50p
Studies of the Lankavatara Sutra	D T Suzuki	6.25p
A Survey of Buddhism	Sangharakshita	1.50p
Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa	Trans Evans	
	Wentz	1.30p
Way of the White Clouds	Lama Govinda	1.80p
The Three Jewels	Sangharakshita	2.50p
	(Paper)	.75p
The Door of Liberation	Geshe Wangyal	2.65p
Mind Reactive and Creative	Sangharakshita	.20p

All orders must be accompanied with a remittance, plus 25p to cover postage for one book, and thereafter an additional 5p for each extra book. Cheques should be made payable to the F.W.B.O. and all orders sent to F.W.B.O. Bookshop, 1a Balmore Street, Archway, London N.19.

TAPE RECORDINGS OF THE VEN. SANGHARAKSHITA'S LECTURES

Tapes are available of most of Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures in 5", 7", and cassette sizes. Lists and prices are available on request from Bob Morrison, 55 St. James Lane, Muswell Hill, London N.10.

FUTURE EVENTS

AT THE ARCHWAY CENTRE:

Day Retreats: Saturdays - June 1, June 29, July 27; Meditation, communication exercises, taped lecture, puja, and food. 10 am - 10 pm, cost £1.

Day Sesshins: Saturdays - June 15, July 13. Intensive day of meditation with walking and chanting. A meal is eaten in the shrine room. 10 am - 10 pm, cost 30p.

Communication Exercises: Sundays - June 30, July 28, September 22. 1 pm - 5 pm, with a break for refreshments, cost £1.

Open Forum: June 8 at 2.30 pm. An opportunity to discuss any ideas or observations about the Centre.

Comprehensive Course in Buddhism: Mondays, September 30 - December 9. Twelve weekly sessions and a weekend retreat, cost £15.

Festivals:

Dharmachakra Day: Thursday, July 4, 3 pm - 10.30 pm.

Padmasambhava Day: Wednesday, July 24, 6 pm - 10.30 pm.

If you wish to attend a Day Retreat or Day Sesshin at Archway, please contact the Centre and book in advance.

Retreats:

Women's Weekend, July 6 - 7.

Summer Retreat, August 9 - 25.

DHARMACHAKRA DAY

Celebrating the 'turning of the wheel of the Dharma', the Buddha's first sermon:

Thursday July 4 - 3.00	Decorations
4.00	Meditation and chanting
5.30	Food
7.00	Meditation and Talk
8.00	Festive Puja
10.00	Rockets

COURSES ON BUDDHISM

From September Subhuti will conduct courses in Buddhism at two London Adult Education Centres - one on Fridays at 7.00pm at Wandsworth Adult Education Institute, the other at the City Literary Institute, Drury Lane, on Saturdays at 5.00pm. The courses will include a period of meditation followed by a talk on the basic teachings and historical development of Buddhism.

SCHOOLS LEAFLET

A leaflet has been prepared, entitled 'An Outline of Buddhism for Schools'. It includes four brief articles as follows: a biography of the Buddha, a history of Buddhism, a summary of the teachings and an outline of the F.W.B.O. Also included is a list of recommended books with comments as to content and suitability of each book. This leaflet is currently available from the Archway Centre and will be sent on request.

SUMMER RETREAT NEWS

It has been necessary to change the date and location of the Summer Retreat this year. It will now be held August 10-25 in the countryside near Farnham in Surrey, in a comfortable and spacious house standing in its own grounds. Most accommodation will be in 2-3 bedded rooms. The cost will be £2 a day. Priority will be given to those booking for the whole period. For booking forms and further details contact the Archway Centre.

HIS HOLINESS GYALWA KARMAPA

is expected to visit England in the Autumn of this year. Those interested in seeing His Holiness or assisting with the visit can obtain further details from:

Ven. Lama Chime Rinpoche
Kham Tibetan House
Ashdon, Saffron Waldon
Essex CB10 2HM

WEEKLY PROGRAMME AT THE FWBO ARCHWAY CENTRE

TUESDAY	7.00 pm	Meditation, study group and Puja
WEDNESDAY	5.00 pm	Hatha Yoga 30p charge
	7.00 pm	Beginners meditation class, followed by a break for tea and talk
	8.30 pm	Recorded lecture by the Ven. Sangharakshita
THURSDAY	6.30 pm	Karate-do 30p charge
SATURDAY	7.00 pm	Double meditation and Puja
SUNDAY	5.30 pm	Beginners meditation class, followed by tea and informal discussion
	8.30 pm	meditation and Puja

There is meditation every morning at the Centre from 8 am - 9 am and the Centre is open all day for individual practice.

Telephone 01 263 2339 or write for details of other events.

THE CENTRE WILL BE CLOSED DURING THE PERIOD OF THE SUMMER RETREAT, AUGUST 10 - 25, EXCEPT FOR TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY MEDITATION CLASSES AT 7.00 PM AND THURSDAY KARATE CLASS AT 6.30 PM.

THE CENTRE WILL BE CLOSED AS ABOVE FOR A FURTHER PERIOD OF ONE WEEK FROM AUGUST 25 TO SEPTEMBER 2 WHILST AN ORDER RETREAT TAKES PLACE

CENTRES & BRANCHES OF THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

LONDON FWBO, 1a Balmore Street, Archway, London N.19
Telephone: 01 263 2339

SURREY Aryatara Buddhist Community, 3 Plough Lane, Purley,
Surrey, CR2 3QB Tel: 01 660 2542

GLASGOW FWBO, Upasaka Vajradaka, 246 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 6QZ
Tel: 041 332 7837

NEW ZEALAND FWBO Auckland, Upasaka Akshobhya, Kalyana Mitra
Buddhist Centre, 442 Beach Road, Mairangi Bay, Auckland, N.Z.

FINLAND FWBO Helsinki, Upasaka Vajrabodhi, Punavuorenkatu 22 C 37,
SF-00150 Helsinki 15., Tel: 669 820

EALING FWBO Ealing, Upasaka Vangisa, 91 Kingsley Ave, London W13 OEH
Tel: 01 997 4109

EXETER FWBO Exeter, Upasika Karuna, 22 Elmside, Exeter, Devon

CORNWALL FWBO Cornwall, Upasaka Manjuvajra, 15 Prospect Road, Truro,
Cornwall. Tel: Truro 4689

NORFOLK FWBO Representative, Upasika Sulocana, The Old Rectory,
Tittleshall, Kings Lynn, Norfolk.

WALES FWBO Representative, Upasaka Hridaya, Tyddyn Rhydderch,
Trrerddol, Corwen, Clwyd, North Wales.

If you would like to contact other Buddhists in your area, write to us and we will send you any other addresses we receive in this way.

We are very glad to give any assistance we can to groups or individuals who are trying to practise or study.