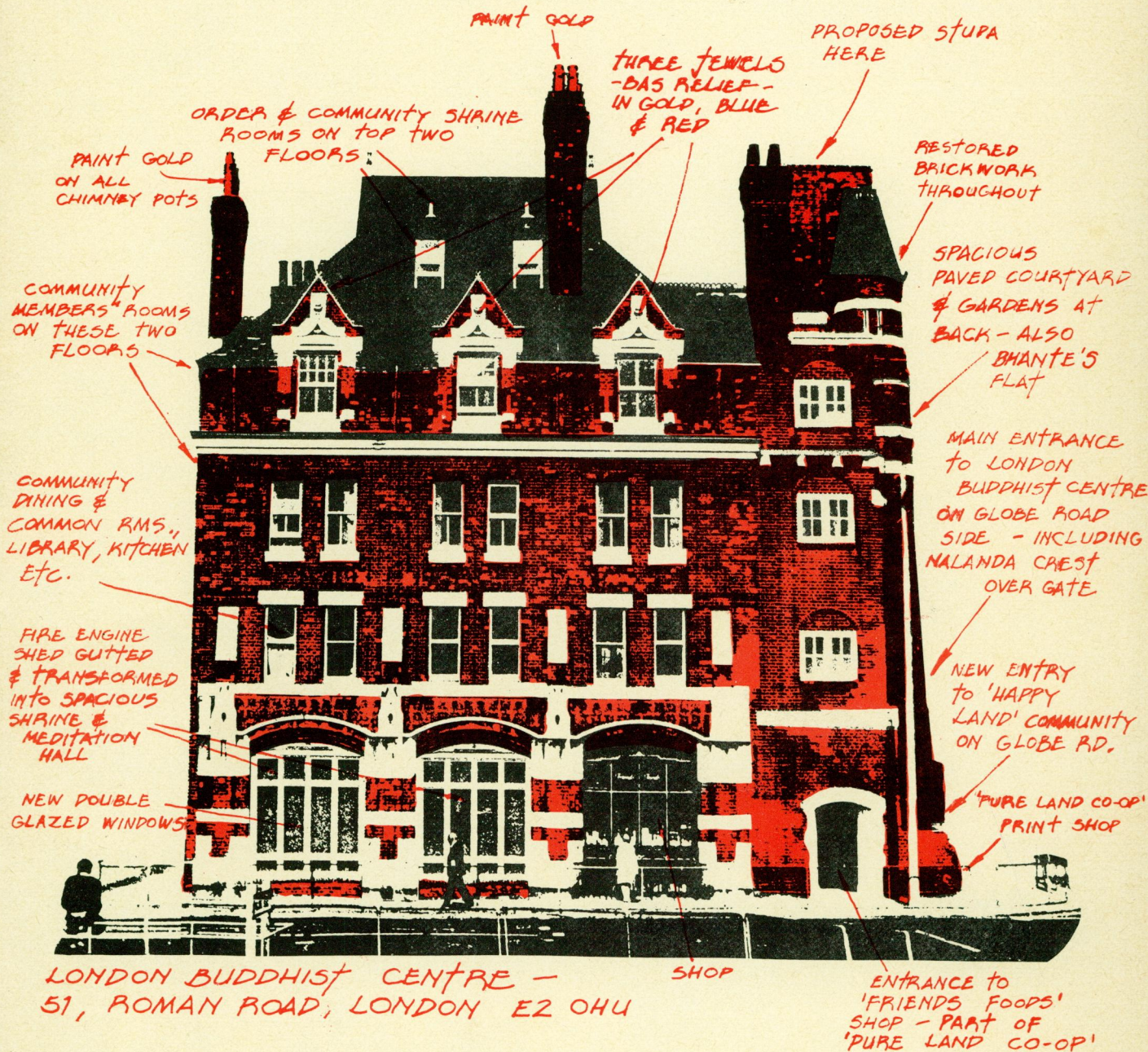


Friends of the Western Buddhist Order Newsletter 40

Price 40p



Sukhavati is

Weekly Programmes

SUKHAVATI

see inner pages for details

MANDALA

Monday	7.00 pm	Dharma course until end of December next meditation course starts in January
Tuesday	6.00 pm	Hatha Yoga
Wednesday	7.00 pm	Beginners' meditation class
Thursday	7.00 pm	Meditation evening with puja

AMITAYUS

Monday	7.15 pm	Introductory evening with meditation instruction (at 19 George Street)
Tuesday	7.15 pm	Meditation evening with puja
Wednesday	7.15 pm	Meditation and Buddhism course (by arrangement)
Thursday	6.00 pm & 7.30 pm	Hatha Yoga

ARYATARA

Monday	6.00 pm & 7.45 pm	Hatha Yoga
Tuesday	10.30 pm	Hatha Yoga
	7.30 pm	Meditation and puja
Wednesday	7.30 pm	Beginners' meditation class

HERUKA

Tuesday	7.30 pm	Beginners' meditation course
Wednesday	7.00 pm	Tape-recorded lecture series, and meditation
Thursday	7.00 pm	Meditation evening with puja

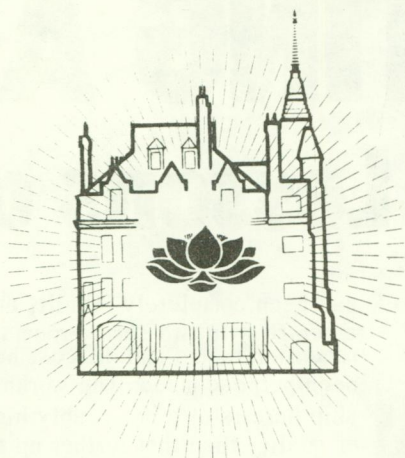
VAJRADHATU

Monday	7.30 pm	Meditation course
Tuesday	7.00 pm	Varied programme including puja and meditation
Wednesday	7.30 pm	Meditation course
Thursday	7.00 pm	Introductory Buddhism (talk/meditation/taped lecture)

MANCHESTER

Meditation classes and Dharma courses are being held.
Telephone 061-225 3372 for details.

Sukhavati



established
3 December 1978

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FWBO NEWSLETTER 40 AUTUMN 78

EDITORIAL

It has taken much longer than we expected. It has called for more workers and more money than we expected. It has been harder and far more demanding than we ever dreamed it would be... So thank goodness we *were* so innocent when we first saw the Old Fire Station in Bethnal Green, for had we known then what it was going to take to turn it into 'Sukhavati' and 'The London Buddhist Centre' we would probably have thrown up our hands in horror at the prospect, and left the place well alone. No doubt we would have gone on to find a new London Centre somewhere else: smaller and simpler perhaps, and probably all would have gone very well there, but a thousand lessons would have gone unlearned, a thousand triumphs would have gone unwon, and numberless issues, basic to the practice of Buddhism in the West, would still have to be confronted. And, of course, we would not now have 'Sukhavati' and the London Buddhist Centre!

Even though for three years a virtual building site, 'Sukhavati' has never for one moment seemed to be simply a sum of its parts. When somebody has said that they were moving into 'Sukhavati', it has always been clear that they were not just intending to do a bit of plumbing or carpentry. We knew that they were willingly exposing themselves to the fiery heat of the most 'total situation' that the Movement had to offer. For three years 'Sukhavati' has been there, not just as a promise of fabulous things to come, but as a warm and energetic community of exceptional dedication, a testing ground for new ideas and insights – single-sex living, hard work, 'big' business – in fact a constant source of inspiration to us all. We have all seen the place working its magical effect on those who have lived there or passed through, and we have all come to see the universal significance of principles which went through their first trials there. All this – and while it was still being built.

Today, if you were to go into the main shrine-room, where the walls still await their first coat of paint, and amble among the singing carpenters and painters (yes, they do sing), and the cassette-recorder that crackles out Mozart, and take in the feel of the place, you would be struck by the unmistakable sense that you were already in a shrine room, already standing in a place that has been dedicated lock, stock and barrel to the Three Jewels, to the Enlightenment of all beings, and has been from the moment that the first team of workers moved in.

By the time you read this, those walls will be painted and dry, the cushions made, the Buddha image in place. All will be still, ready for the opening festivities. A whole new chapter is about to begin, and everything that has been created there, everything that is being planned to happen there, exclaims the fact that the life of the new Centre is going to be every bit as exciting, every bit as inspiring, and every bit as worthy of rejoicing in, as has been its birth.

NAGABODHI

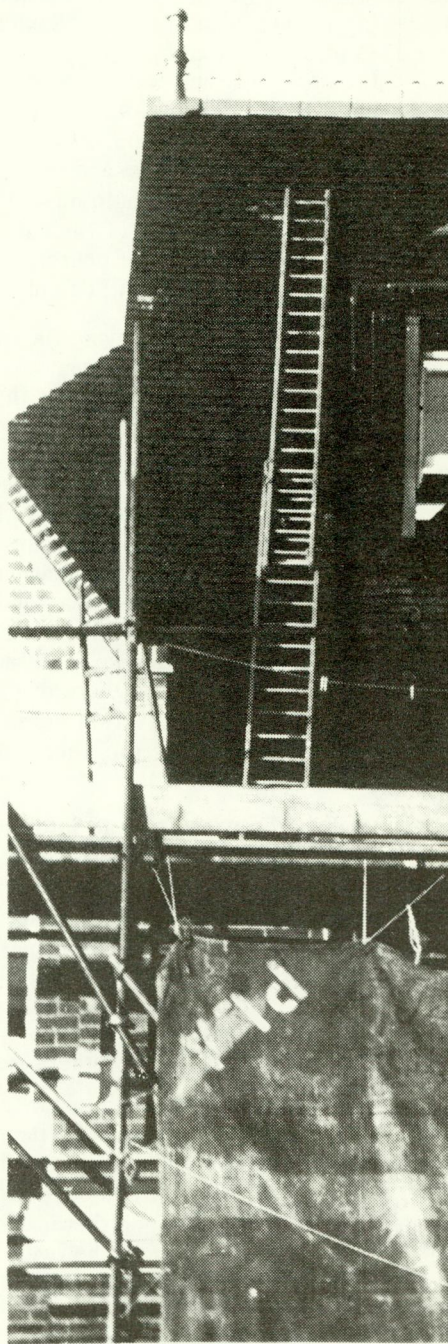
It is now three and a half years since three of us pulled the corrugated iron off a window or two in the Old Fire Station, Bethnal Green. We swept aside the dust and litter, rolled out our mattresses and sat bewildered by the maze of rooms and the immensity of the work to be done. Someone glanced out of the window and saw a platoon of policemen hurling themselves over the gates, with further reinforcements following up behind. They were somewhat sceptical when we told them who we were, but we pacified them with tea and they left us to it. After that, as far as many of the inhabitants of Bethnal Green went, we were seen no more. Most of the corrugated iron stayed up, and it was only the faint sound of hammering, sawing and drilling which betrayed our presence. Indeed many locals have been surprised when we tell them that we have been here for three years and more.

For the Movement too, 'Sukhavati' has been an internal affair, consuming money and men voraciously but with little outward show. It has been a bit like a pressure cooker; new ingredients are constantly being added, but apart from a bit of steam coming out the top, there is no concrete evidence of what is happening... Well, the lid is coming off now, and it will be plain for all to see just what has been done, just what has been cooked up.

The most obvious first impression is that the building itself has changed. The corrugated iron is gone, the windows have been replaced, the brickwork repaired and all the gutters and drainpipes, windows and stonework have been painted, with ornamental details picked out in gold. The four community floors have been rearranged, a kitchen and bathrooms installed, a library formed, a flat for the Ven. Sangharakshita prepared, and fire protection added throughout. On the ground floor, the original fire stricken structure

CREATING A

Lessons al



has been completely rebuilt, and a centre with two shrine-rooms, reception rooms and offices, has been purpose-made. The workmanship here is of a noticeably higher quality than that further up the building, and has even impressed the Council's Building Inspector, who is a hard man to please. This all has been a notable achievement by the foreman, Atula, who has been, throughout most of the project, the only 'professional'. He has managed to weld together a pretty competent building team.

Although the most tangible change has taken place in the building itself, in other areas more remarkable developments have taken place. In taking on the 'Sukhavati' project, the FWBO itself has had to expand in many different ways. Simply as an organisation it has shown an enormous development of capabilities. When I remember the crucial interview between the Greater London Council as landlords of the building, Nagabodhi and myself for the FWBO, the Council officers were interviewing the four or five bodies who were contending for the lease on the property, to find out their financial competence and so forth. We quickly scrambled together a cost estimate of building work based on our experience of renovating short-life housing. The figures were literally worked out on the back of an envelope. The Council officers expressed polite disbelief at our estimate of £5000-10,000, and let us know that they themselves reckoned the costs to be nearer £150,000. In the end

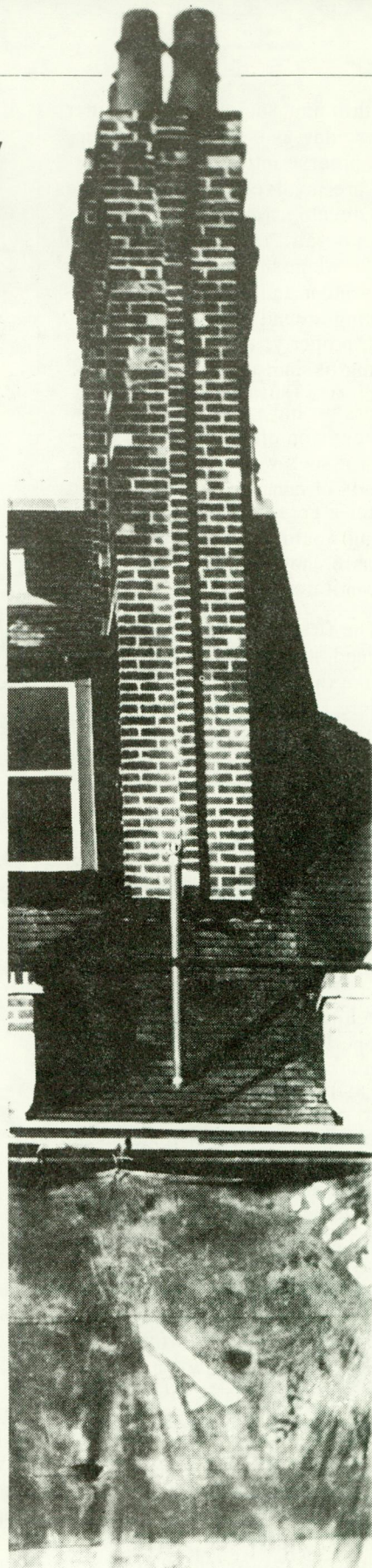
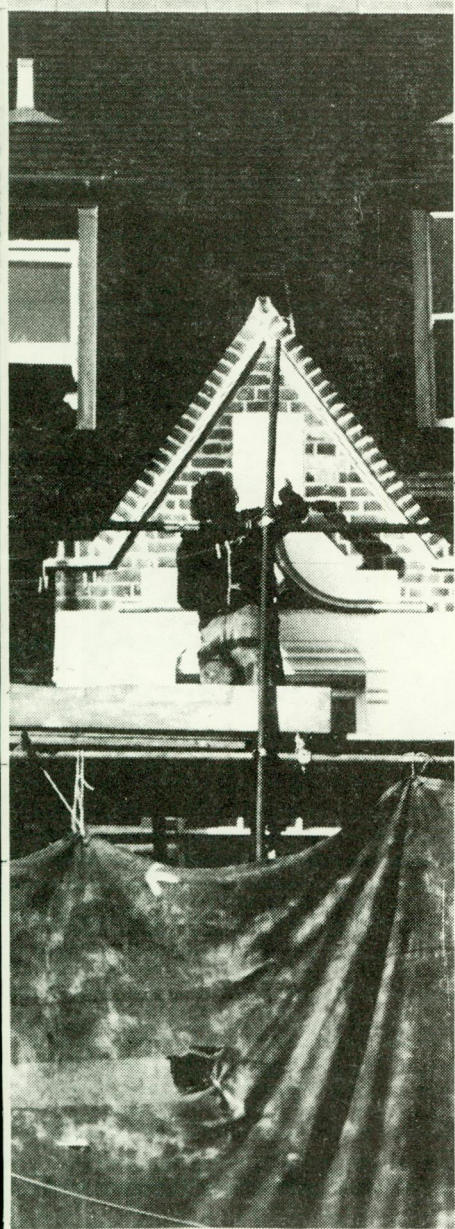
NEW SOCIETY

ong the way

they were more nearly right; it has cost about £100,000. Nonetheless, they must have been impressed by our youthful innocence and enthusiasm, if nothing else, since we were awarded the lease.

We now handle an income which is likely to exceed £150,000 this year, and have an office staff and administration to suit such greatly increased responsibilities. We have also successfully negotiated grants with both local and central government: a process which in itself requires a competent and patient administrative team.

The most fundamental change has taken place in the attitudes of the people concerned in the project. These too have been stretched by the task. It has changed us from being 'part-timers' to being 'full-timers'. We started, on the whole, as volunteers having a bit of fun, doing a bit of work together in a cause with which we generally sympathised. We now find ourselves living and working inside what amounts to a complete new society, in which all our old ideas have been challenged and revised. As a part-timer one sees Buddhism as being an interesting and even inspiring adjunct to a life otherwise relatively unaffected by Buddhist practice. As a full-timer, one's centre of gravity has entirely shifted, and one lives and works in a new, more creative way, within the 'new society' — a complete culture in which all aspects of life are represented, based upon the needs and practice of developing individuals. The horizons



of this new society stretch wider every day as we see yet clearer the precise implications of what we are involved in. It develops as we develop. No-one has planned it in detail. The details are filled in as we push deeper and deeper in wonder and joy at what is happening around us. Work, economics, property, art, play; all are being assimilated into the 'New Society'. During the last three years we have been through a succession of phases when certain issues were uppermost in the minds of community members. After a great deal of debate something would happen which would enable another area of life to be assimilated into the new society.

The first issue to arise came immediately with the decision to lease the Old Fire Station as a future London Centre. This was the issue of 'organisation'. There was at that time a vague disquiet at the idea of developing an 'organisation' or of insisting upon efficiency. Many people have had a bad experience of bureaucracy and large organisations, and thus tend to feel that *any* organisation is undesirable. Naturally enough, we do not want to develop a vast and alienated administrative machine, but to establish anything properly, some things have to be organised as smoothly and clearly as possible. This reaction was part of what we encountered again and again as an over-romanticisation of the spiritual life, which leaves it a thin and pallid fantasy without substantial existence.

The point is not to stop organising, but to stop organising on a neurotic basis, and to start to organise on a basis of enthusiasm, inspiration and friendliness, in the context of a new society in which everything is infused with the ideals of human development. So we set to and organised a building team, and a massive (for those days) fund-raising operation.

After the first few months of work, the excitement began to



Atula — where would we have been without him?

wear off. The twelve or so of us living at 'Sukhavati' were mostly inexperienced in building work and had not conceived of a job which was as open-ended as this one appeared to be; thus we confronted the second issue: work. Many felt that the spiritual life meant spending all day meditating in the country — not spending at least eight hours a day doing dirty and seemingly unending work. Many found it difficult to sustain a regular routine of work. After much dis-

cussion it gradually became accepted that work is an integral and even essential aspect of one's development: work is the key to energy, itself so fundamental to the spiritual life. In work, particularly hard physical work, there is an opportunity to express and refine one's most basic energies within a positive framework. It also provides a chance to experience oneself in a natural and unself-conscious way, and to develop openness and companion-



administrative details



a house meeting – “the greatest danger is institutionalisation”

ship with one's workmates. Above all, work within the new society provides one with a worthwhile and attainable objective – the completion of the task in hand, which itself contributes to the further growth of the Movement. No doubt there is the occasional dream of that kind of endless Sunday afternoon which many used to identify as the spiritual life. However, most people now realise the benefits of regular and ‘innocent’ work. Many have noticeably blossomed

through it. After building work is completed, and a regular income has been established, more time can be given to meditation and study, yet work will always be a basic staple at ‘Sukhavati’.

Once it was accepted that work was a useful and necessary part of the spiritual life, another issue became apparent: play. A number of people were clearly pushing themselves harder than was good for them. Weekends were often de-

clared to be ‘energy vacuums’. It seemed that we had accepted work but had not learned how to relax creatively. This was also reflected in the unaesthetic surroundings and the lack of care which we were taking with the community. Very few had taken the trouble to decorate their rooms, many of which had peeling wallpaper or bare plaster walls. Gradually this area too received attention. A magazine called ‘Padma’ was published, with poetry, essays, and comment by community members. A fortnightly community meeting was instituted at which, first of all, each member of the community says whatever he wishes to the rest of the community – how he has been, any thoughts or insights he has had, or any good books he has read, plays, concerts, or films he has seen. After this there are two or three ‘acts’: poetry readings, plays, music or mime. A recent evening consisted of a reading of ‘The Artist’s Dream’, a short story by the Ven. Sangharakshita, some Catalan songs sung by our cook – a Spanish mitra, and a mime of genius of a balloon being blown up and bursting. The content of such an evening veers wildly between the low and the high-brow, and is many times better than an evening out.

There has also been an awakening to culture. Many people have developed a taste for classical music, for poetry, or for painting which they previously did not have. The value of good music or poetry in refining and developing positive emotion is clearly felt and encouraged. Lastly it should be said that the value of positive communication has been clearly recognised. People are friendly and happy, and it is always possible to communicate with someone.

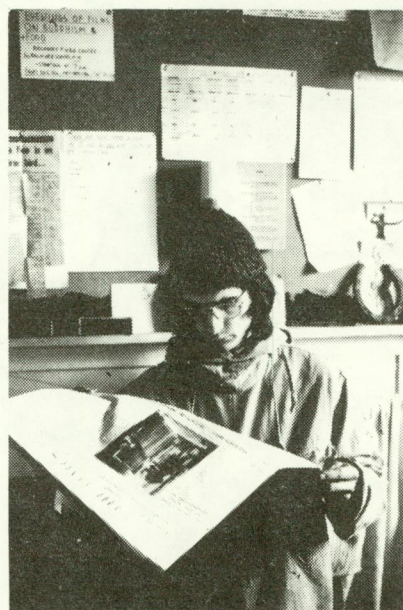
Often relaxation and play are seen as a kind of reward for work and a passive palliation of frustration is sought. So one sort of drowns in, say, TV, drink or drugs,

or a pulp magazine. Within the new society, there is certainly play and relaxation, but they involve an enjoyment which is not an indulgence of escapist or negative feelings, but which sharpens the mind and refines the emotions. The former gives rise to that 'Monday morning feeling', and the latter tones one up and makes one feel eager and ready for creative work.

After eighteen months of work, we ran out of money. Up to that point all money had come from a large bequest and from fund-raising in the Movement — some £30,000 in all. We now had to make the money ourselves, which raised the issue of business. Again, there was a vague feeling that somehow business was not easily reconciled with the spiritual life. However, the importance of making money, rather than relying on donations was abundantly clear. We had to have money to finish the project and even survive. We had to overcome a reluctance to charge a fair rate for the work done in the course of contract building work, and we had to get used to doing work for clients who were not always in sympathy with us. We held a series of seminars on the subject of Right Livelihood, on such topics as 'Is making money immoral?'. One important realisation that we came to was that, far from being antithetical to the spiritual life, business could be said to be its basis. If one is dependent on others economically, then they are in a position to impose their demands on one. "He who pays the piper calls the tune". The new society must support itself. It must, of course, ensure that its trading is ethically sound — no guns or exploitation — but to engage in trade itself is not in itself unskillful. Though there is still a shortage of entrepreneurial skills, we are quite willing to make money for the new society.

Another major issue has been that of responsibility. The great-

est danger in a large community (Sukhavati now numbers 35 men) is institutionalisation, the possibility that each individual community member fails to experience himself as essentially responsible for what happens within the community. There then comes to be an expectation that things will just be done for one. Often this

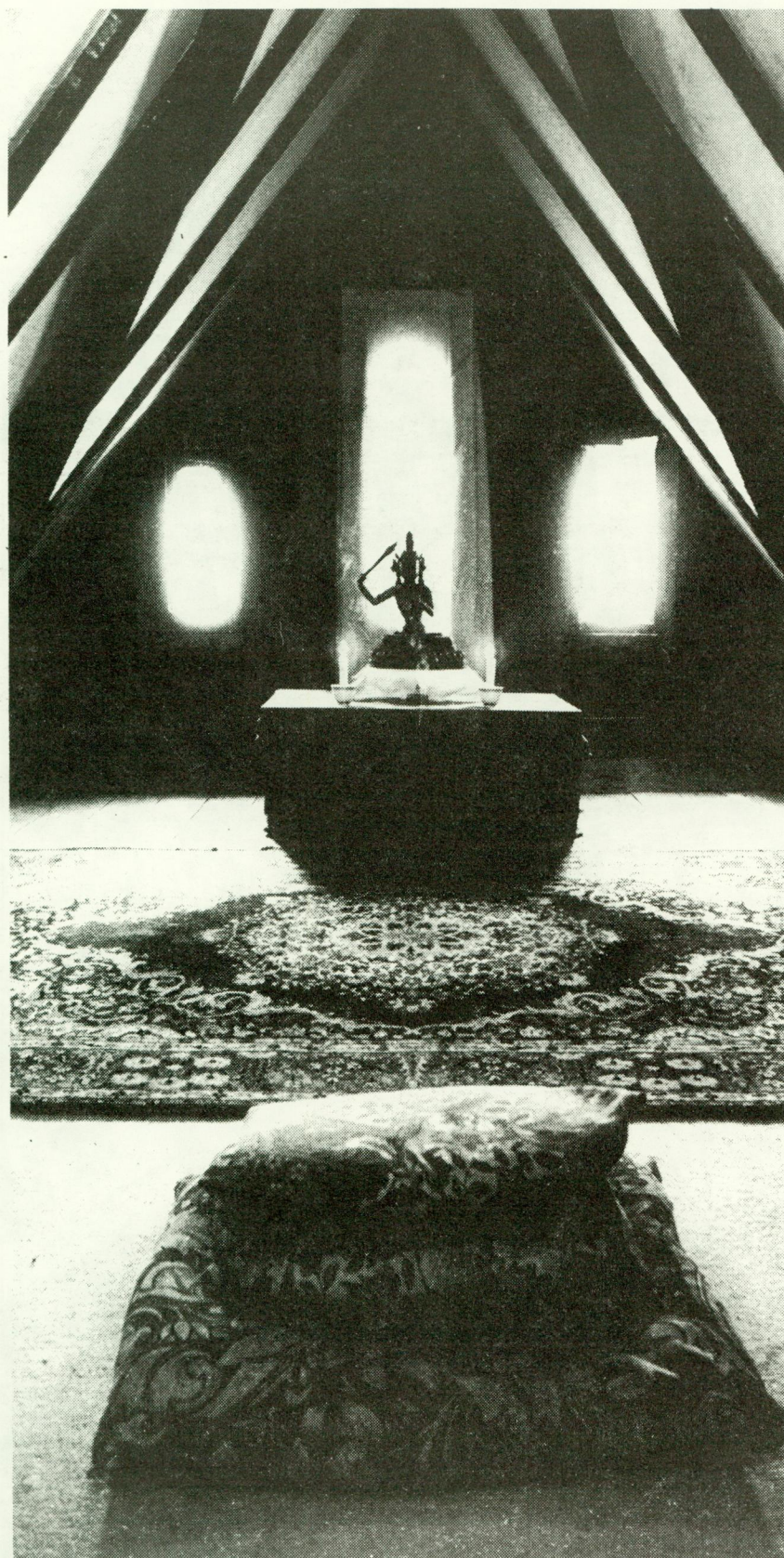


keeping in touch

has meant that domestic details were overlooked and that the community became dirty and untidy. Partly this can be overcome by having a housekeeper who is specifically responsible for the community, but the question of alienation has to be tackled differently. It is quite difficult in a large community for everyone to feel that his voice is heard. A meeting of 35 people, all of whom wish to express their views on a particular issue, can be very frustrating. We therefore initiated a process whereby issues are now discussed weekly by a committee of members of the community with executive responsibility. The minutes of their meeting are then discussed in smaller meetings. At the weekly house meeting on Monday mornings, all views are brought together. So far, this system has worked very well, ensuring a high degree of involvement

by all in what is going on. We have had some extremely lively debates on all sorts of issues. Generally speaking it seems to have given everyone a much greater sense of responsibility for all aspects of the community and its work. If there is to be a genuine New Society, everyone within it must function as a responsible individual, or otherwise it is little more than a new welfare state.

Allied to the issue of responsibility has been that of property. We have a system which we call the common purse. Anything that anyone earns goes into the common purse, out of which the expenses of the community are met, as well as funds for the building work and the Centre. We try to operate on the principle of 'give what you can and take what you need'. At present, with a very tight budget, it can seem that the giving greatly outruns the taking. Although it is considerably better now, there have been times when the community's food bill had to be drastically cut back. However, each member of the community now receives his board and lodging, and four pounds a week (if he needs it). All other expenses — false teeth, clothes, retreats, etc., are met out of the common purse. We are trying to cultivate an attitude, not of receiving wages for work done, but of giving our time and energy freely and being supported in order that we can do so. Some people have found this quite hard. Not having much money in your pocket can give some people a feeling of insecurity. Yet, if one goes along with it, it can be an extremely liberating arrangement which completely alters the acquisitive attitudes with which one habitually operates. There is still a tendency to treat things which do not belong to anyone personally in a quite careless way — our vans have the life knocked out of them. It seems



The Order shrine, up in the rafters

that if an object does not belong to anyone it is looked after by no one. We are trying to cultivate an attitude of 'stewardship' of articles. They are not ours but we are looking after them so that they are cared for.

With all this ferment, what of meditation, Puja and study? There have been times when these have not been given the kind of emphasis that they deserve. At times, in the dead of winter, at the height of the money crisis, 6.30 am was just too daunting a prospect for some of us, and attendance in the shrine room became somewhat ragged. However, there has been a certain reciprocal relationship between spiritual practice and the resolution of many of the issues that I've been talking about. As the lineaments of the New Society become clearer, it is easier and easier to function within it. Community meditation practice has developed in strength a great deal since we started.

In retrospect, it is plain that a great deal more has been achieved in the last three and a half years in Bethnal Green than the conversion of a burnt-out Fire Station. We have at least commenced to resolve some of the issues which are raised by living in the light of the radical ideals which Buddhism embodies. Most of what we have come up against has concerned the setting up of a large community and establishing a balanced and complete life style for it. With the opening of the new Centre, we are now beginning to turn more directly outwards, to spread the ideals of the New Society. There is no doubt that the last three years at Sukhavati have seen the establishment of a firm basis for a Centre which will bring more and more people into the orbit of that complete culture which we call 'the New Society'.

SUBHUTI

...and an entire Buddhist Culture

There is probably no one more intimate with the details of 'Sukhavati' and the London Buddhist Centre than Subhuti, Chairman of the FWBO there. Here he gives us a guide to its many facets.



Sukhavati, the name of a building still known in the neighbourhood of Bethnal Green as "The Old Fire Station", is the location of three separate but linked activities — a Centre, a Community and a Co-operative — which are themselves the basis of what is fast becoming an entire Buddhist culture. What are those three, and what will be happening within them when the doors of Sukhavati open to the public in late November?

Centre

The Centre. The ground floor at Sukhavati, with its two shrine rooms, reception rooms and offices, in conjunction with the shrine room and reception room down the road at Golgonooza, will become the London Buddhist Centre. Every evening of the week there will be activities within each meditation room — meditation classes and courses, introductory courses on Buddhism, study groups, lectures, yoga classes, etc. On Wednesday nights there will be an Open Night which will provide a comprehensive introduction to all the FWBO activities. At 7pm there will be a meditation class followed by tea at 8pm. At 8.30pm there will be a beginners' yoga class at Golgonooza, a talk by an Order member in the Main Shrine Room and communication exercises, slide shows, discussion groups, etc. in the small shrine room and study rooms.

The shrine room at Golgonooza will be used principally for yoga and there will be classes there most nights of the week. There will also be a series of "Communication Courses", based upon the communication exercises which are a familiar feature of retreats. If a suitable teacher can be found, there will be T'ai Ch'i Chuan classes or possibly Judo or Karate. There will also be occasional events such as films, concerts, poetry readings, cookery classes, etc.; cultural activities which are related, directly or indirectly, to the development of the individual. We hope that in time this aspect of our activities will grow into a regular programme. These rooms will thus be devoted more to activities which are not Buddhist in the strict sense.

The main shrine room, besides being used for beginners' meditation courses, will have a weekly regulars' meditation class and an evening for Mitras followed by study groups. The small shrine room will house beginners' courses in meditation and introductory courses in Buddhism as well as a study night for regulars.

The Centre will also be in use throughout the day with a regular programme of yoga, meditation and study. A number of Order members will be in the Centre at all times to meet visitors.

At weekends there will be a series of non-residential seminars and retreats including a yoga weekend, a massage weekend, a meditation retreat and a seminar on various aspects of the Dharma, each month. Over the Christmas period we will be having a "Winter equinox retreat" for those who wish to take full advantage of the peace and quiet of the Christmas lull.

The Centre will be run by a team of nine Order members who will be devoting most of their time to its activities. They will also be taking classes and courses, giving lectures and holding study groups throughout London and the South of England. We hope to be able soon to provide a

"wandering" Order member who will circulate amongst various groups of Friends and Mitras throughout the country.

We have also made an agreement with the owners of a country house near the Medway Towns in Kent; Capt. and Mrs Kennedy, the parents of an Order member, are kindly allowing part of the house to be used by the FWBO for retreats in return for maintenance work on the house and garden. We will be converting an out-house into a shrine room and making other adaptations. The house is set in a large garden of about two acres and overlooks the rolling countryside of the North Downs. On a clear day, the journey from Sukhavati to Court Lodge can be made in 50 minutes. There will be retreats there every weekend and frequent week-long retreats. There is plenty of work to be done there and, no doubt, we will be having a number of working retreats.

We expect that by the end of 1979, more than 1,000 people each week will be using the London Buddhist Centre and that its influence will have spread in all directions. We will be making special efforts to attract the many tourists who flood through London each year, so that the Centre will, no doubt, become known as a



'Sukhavati' and the London Buddhist Centre



For a while the main shrine room became Chintamani's studio.

centre of Buddhism throughout the world.

A great deal of work and care has gone into the preparation of the Centre. The ground floor was designed largely by Devaraja, an Order member who designs for films and television. The craftsmanship, particularly in the woodwork is of a very high standard and testifies greatly to the skill of Atula and his two apprentices Alaya and Abhaya. Cintamani's two Buddha images — both greater than life size, one standing, the other seated in meditation — effectively mark the birth of a new direction for Buddhist art. Cintamani will also be painting a mural of the Pure Land in the reception room and Padmapani is painting a large Windhorse, 20 feet high, on a wall overlooking the entrance. The entrance is through a courtyard which will be paved and planted. Stepping into the London Buddhist Centre will be like stepping into another world.

Community

The Community. The top four floors will house a residential community of 25 men. Half will be in shared rooms, the rest will have rooms of their own. There is a large common room and a good kitchen, a library, and a shrine room in the attic. Some of the community members will be working in the centre as part of the Order team taking classes or as part of the administrative team which will be running what is already a busy office. This will amount to about six people, the remainder of both teams being drawn from other communities such as Amaravati and Beulah.

There will be a housekeeper and a cook, who will be responsible for all the domestic arrangements. The remainder of the community will be made up of workers in the Co-operative, who will be earning money to support the Centre's activities.

The Community will continue to operate a "common purse" whereby all money earned goes directly into a common fund from which all expenses are paid and pocket money given.



Beans with everything ...

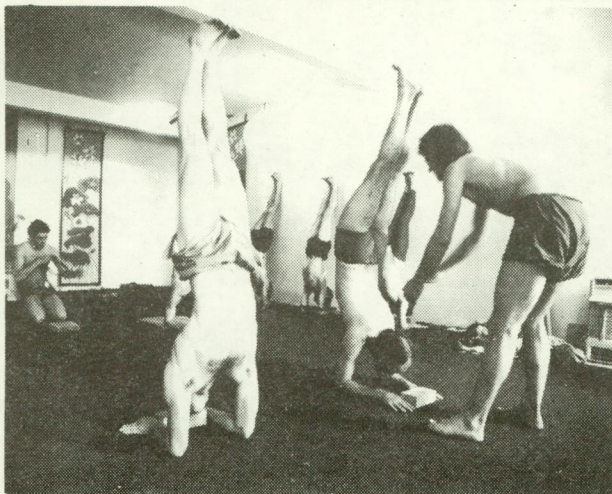
Most community members will be here on a long-term basis — one or two years at least. There will be a few, however, particularly from overseas, who will be spending three or four months with us. The emphasis of the community will be towards "training". One cannot, properly speaking, "train" for ordination. It is not a matter of knowing certain things, passing exams and tests and so forth. Nonetheless, one can prepare for it. One can put oneself into situations which are likely to help one to develop that degree of individuality and commitment which constitutes readiness for ordination. This will involve regular meditation and puja, regular study and discussion, and work which is a suitable medium for the expression of one's energies and which stretches and develops them. Above all it means contact with the spiritual community, contact with Order members. There will be enough Order members in and around Sukhavati to provide all its Mitras and Friends with a really vital and stimulating communication. This already exists to some extent, but, with the completion of building work, more people will be freer from other responsibilities and will be able to give time and attention in this way. As the Community and Centre become more solvent financially,

then it should be possible to give more and more time to study and meditation and, indeed, other creative pursuits.

No doubt a stay in the Community will provide a truly valuable experience for Mitras and Friends from countries such as India, where as yet the FWBO has not been long established. We hope very soon to welcome one or two people from the Centre in Poona. Already Sukhavati has had community members, workers and guests from France, Holland, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia, Spain, South Africa, USA, Canada, Chile, India, Japan and others besides.

Coupled with the more direct Dharmic training, community members will have a chance to gain an experience in Public Speaking, leading meditation classes and study groups. Most people who leave Sukhavati as Order members should be capable and experienced in the running of Centre activities. They will also have experience of working in Right Livelihood projects and should know quite a bit of the background to them.

Sukhavati will form part of a circuit, with Padmaloka and T y n-y-ddol through which male Mitras and



ancient disciplines



...and the technological revolution?



a meditation class at the EEMC

Friends will get a chance to experience a number of different aspects or emphases of the spiritual life. At Sukhavati the accent will be on work and practical training, at Padmaloka on study, combined with work and meditation, and at T yn-y-ddol, on meditation. A stay of two years at Sukhavati would probably include up to six months at Padmaloka and three months at T yn-y-ddol. After all that, a Mitra should certainly be ready for ordination, and indeed for anything.

In the Bethnal Green area there are already three communities, at Sukhavati, Golgonooza and Beulah. Another two are projected. Many more will no doubt be *needed* especially as the Centre brings more and more people into the orbit of the Movement. We are considering setting up a housing association which can

renovate and assign houses for communities. There is even some possibility of obtaining a disused block of flats which could house 20 or 30 communities!

Co-operatives

The Co-operative. At present there are some ten Sukhavati community members working in the Co-op together with two non-residents. Eventually we hope that the Co-op will provide a means of support and of contact for many people attending the Centre and living in local communities. It is possible that some people will only find out about Buddhism through working with us in our co-operatives.

All the present businesses will be expanding over the next few months;

the press is purchasing a new machine, the foods business will probably start packaging and wholesaling, the editorial service may be taking on the editing of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, and the hardware store will be purchasing new stock. Besides this, we will be opening a bookshop immediately next door to Sukhavati and a snack bar which will feed Co-op members and Centre workers as well as visitors to the Centre.

With this combination of Community, Co-operative and Centre, Sukhavati becomes the focus of a lively "town-within-a-town" which is rapidly spreading around it. There is no doubt that, once open, Sukhavati is going to be a very exciting place to be.

SUBHUTI

The London Buddhist Centre Opening Programmes

PROGRAMME FOR THE OPENING WEEK

- Saturday 25 November**
10 am - 10 pm Day for all Order members
- Sunday 26 November**
10 am - 10 pm Day for Mitras
- Monday 27 November**
5 pm - 9.30 pm Day for all Friends
- Tuesday 28 November**
5 pm - 9.30 pm Reception for other Buddhists
- Wednesday 29 November**
12 pm - 5 pm Press reception
5 pm - 9.30 pm Reception for Officials, Councillors,
& businesses who have helped
- Thursday 30 November**
5 pm - 9.30 pm Reception for interested and
sympathetic groups & individuals
- Friday 1 December**
5 pm - 9.30 pm Reception for personal friends of
community members
- Saturday 2 December**
9 am - 9 pm Open Day for general public
- Sunday 3 December**
10 am - 10 pm Dedication Ceremony, with those
who have helped build Sukhavati

Each evening reception will consist of tours of the building, exhibitions of photographs and paintings, supper, a talk and meditation for those who wish.

During the Open Day there will be a continuous programme of yoga, meditation, talks, and slide shows, throughout the day.

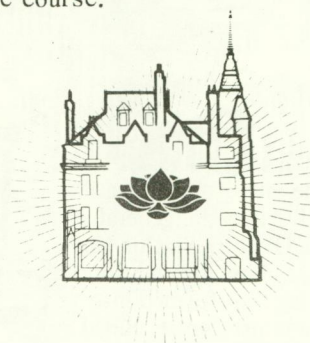
From 10 am on Saturday 25 November the main shrine room will be in continuous use, day and night, by relays of meditators from FWBO centres throughout Britain, until the dedication on Sunday evening.

PROGRAMME AT SUKHAVATI AFTER THE OPENING

- Monday**
1 pm Beginners' meditation
7 pm Yoga course
Beginners' meditation course
(6 weeks)
Men's mitra meeting
- Tuesday**
1 pm Dharma course
7 pm Regulars' meditation class
Dharma course
- Wednesday**
1 pm Taped lecture and discussion
7 pm Open Night: Beginners' meditation
Yoga, communication exercises,
discussion, talk.
- Thursday**
1 pm Beginners' meditation
7 pm Communication course
Taped lecture
Regulars' study groups
- Friday**
6 pm Intermediate yoga
7 pm Meditation and Buddhism course
7.30 Beginners' Yoga

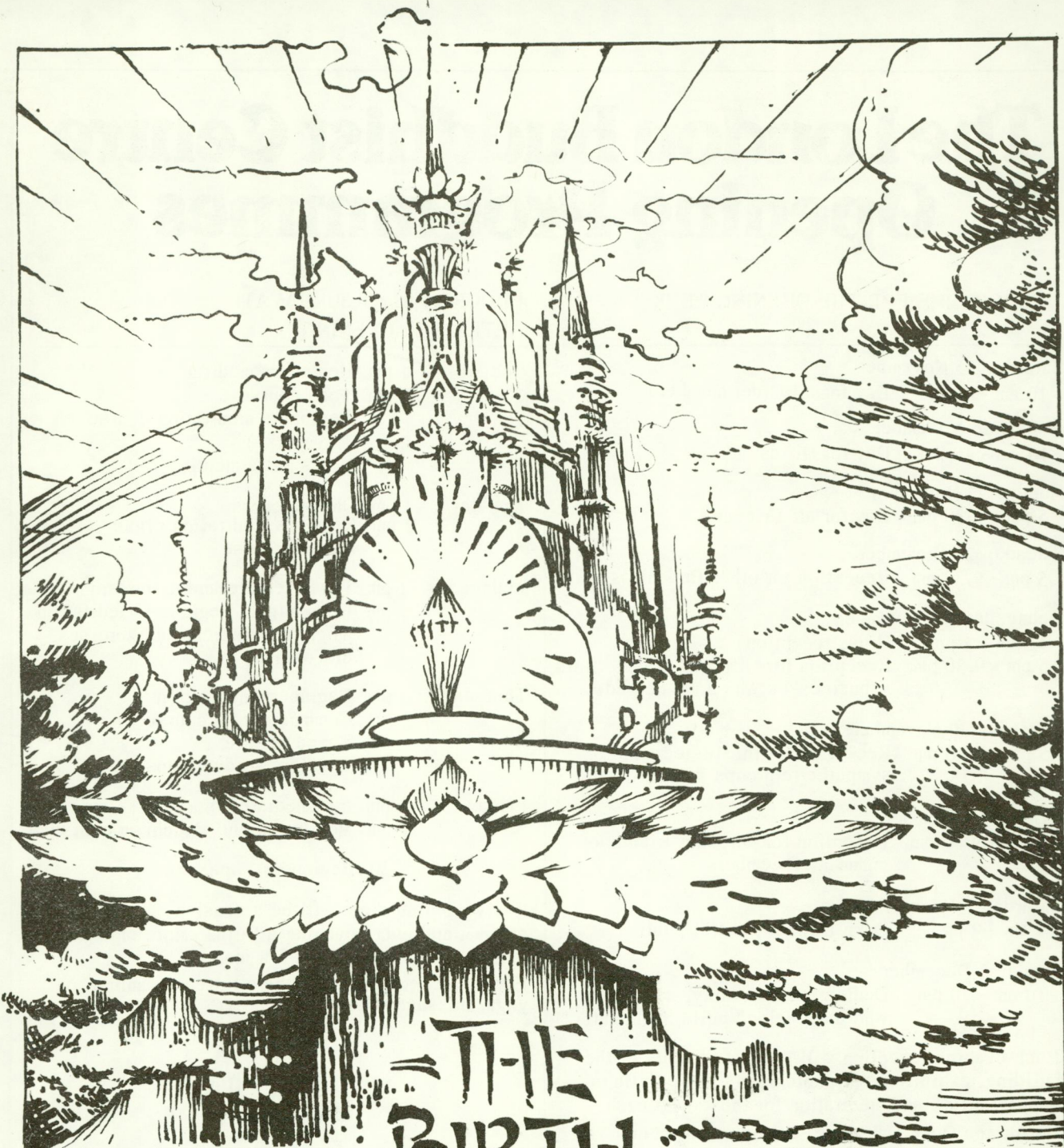
Every morning there will be a session of meditation at 8 am and every evening a Puja. More classes will be added in the next few months.

Every weekend there will be a retreat, seminar, or yoga/massage course.



Authority and the Individual in the New Society

A public lecture by the Ven. Sangharakshita on Monday 4th December at 7 pm,
at the Great Hall, Caxton Hall, Westminster, London SW1 Admission 50p



When people talk of "Sukhavati" within the FWBO they are generally referring to the Old Fire Station (in Bethnal Green), whose ground floor is currently being transformed into the London Buddhist Centre. But if you mention "Sukhavati" to a Buddhist friend who has had no contact with the FWBO, the vision that will be conjured up in his mind will not be of the dusty streets of London's East End, but of a paradise, a world of beauty and peace, shining with jewels and adorned with lotus flowers, and presided over by a red

THE BIRTH — of a — PURE LAND

Buddha-figure whose expression radiates the fullness of Compassion. So what does "Sukhavati" represent in Buddhist tradition, and what connection is there between our friend's vision of jewels and lotuses and a once-derelict fire station in Bethnal Green?

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, Sukhavati is the Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha. The word "Sukhavati" literally means "The Happy Land" or "The Land of Bliss", and it is perhaps the most widely-known example of what is

called a "Buddha-ksetra", a Buddha-field or Buddha-country. The Ven. Sangharakshita explains how such a Buddha-field comes into existence in his *Survey of Buddhism*:

"Seeing how hard it is for sentient beings, burdened as they are with the miseries of mundane existence, to find an opportunity to even hear the Dharma, much less to practise it, a certain Bodhisattva out of compassion makes a solemn vow that after he has attained Supreme Buddhahood he will establish a Buddha-field wherein conditions will be conducive in the highest possible degree to the winning of Enlightenment."¹

It is not possible here to go into the views of Sukhavati that have been put forward by different Buddhist teachers, but we can say that, broadly speaking, Sukhavati is a world in which the whole environment serves to concentrate the mind upon the Transcendental. In traditional descriptions of Sukhavati² even the lakes and rivers as they flow by, cool and refreshing, give off sounds which remind one of the Dharma. These descriptions are without exception very rich, resplendent with details of jewel-trees, gold, silver, coral, and all manner of precious substances.

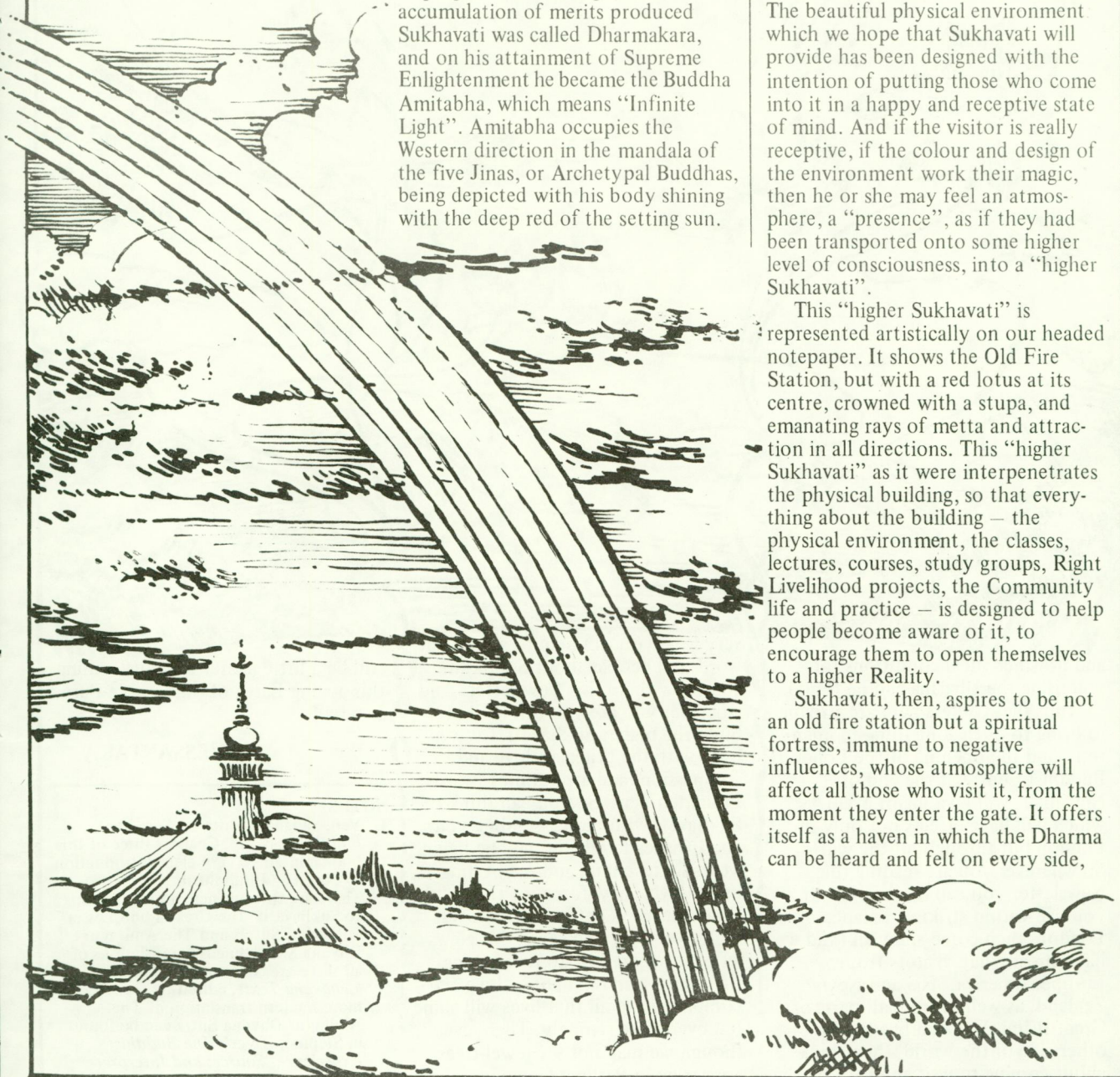
The Bodhisattva whose firmness of purpose and unimaginable accumulation of merits produced Sukhavati was called Dharmakara, and on his attainment of Supreme Enlightenment he became the Buddha Amitabha, which means "Infinite Light". Amitabha occupies the Western direction in the mandala of the five Jinas, or Archetypal Buddhas, being depicted with his body shining with the deep red of the setting sun.

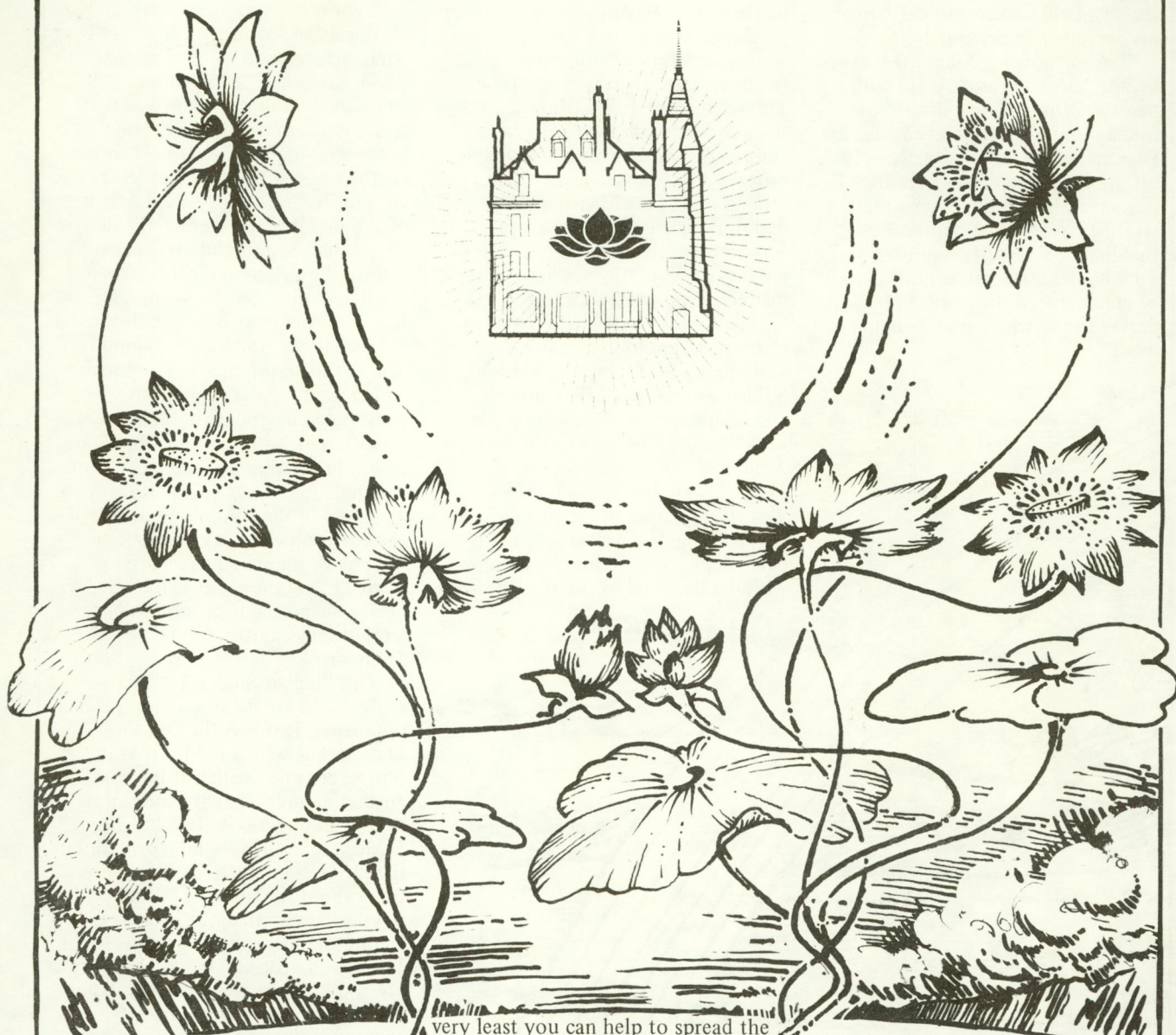
He is the head of the Lotus Family, and especially embodies the love and compassion aspects of Enlightenment.

So how does this legendary or mythical Sukhavati presided over by Amitabha relate to No. 51 Roman Road, London E.2.? We hope that when the building is opened at the end of November the connection will not be too hard to discern. Then the visitor will, we hope, be impressed by the physical environment: the figures of the Buddha, the murals, the design of the shrine-rooms and reception rooms, the colour and brightness of the decoration. But these things, just like the jewel-trees in the traditional Sukhavati, are not ends in themselves. The beautiful physical environment which we hope that Sukhavati will provide has been designed with the intention of putting those who come into it in a happy and receptive state of mind. And if the visitor is really receptive, if the colour and design of the environment work their magic, then he or she may feel an atmosphere, a "presence", as if they had been transported onto some higher level of consciousness, into a "higher Sukhavati".

This "higher Sukhavati" is represented artistically on our headed notepaper. It shows the Old Fire Station, but with a red lotus at its centre, crowned with a stupa, and emanating rays of metta and attraction in all directions. This "higher Sukhavati" as it were interpenetrates the physical building, so that everything about the building — the physical environment, the classes, lectures, courses, study groups, Right Livelihood projects, the Community life and practice — is designed to help people become aware of it, to encourage them to open themselves to a higher Reality.

Sukhavati, then, aspires to be not an old fire station but a spiritual fortress, immune to negative influences, whose atmosphere will affect all those who visit it, from the moment they enter the gate. It offers itself as a haven in which the Dharma can be heard and felt on every side,





and in which ideal conditions for practising the Dharma can be found.

Thus the workers here are striving to bring to birth something momentous, and the opening of the London Buddhist Centre at the end of November will be a major event, which will have effects not only in London but throughout the world. So wherever you are reading this Newsletter you can be involved. If you live within striking distance of London, then come and visit (and we have already had visitors from Europe, America, Asia and New Zealand, as well as from all parts of Great Britain). If you live on the other side of the world, then think about coming to visit anyway! At the

very least you can help to spread the word; tell people about Sukhavati and show them this Newsletter. And wherever you are you can help to build the higher Sukhavati, for it is built with the bricks of love and compassion, and aspiration towards Enlightenment. So you can think of Sukhavati with metta, sending your good wishes to all who will be living, working, teaching, and meditating here, to this new force for the Dharma that is entering the world.

If everyone who reads this Newsletter is inspired to do these things, then the warm red light of love and compassion to all that lives will shine out ever more strongly. Then, even though we may not see jewel-trees appearing in Bethnal Green, we shall

still be a little nearer to transforming this aching Earth of ours into a Pure Land.

VESSANTARA

NOTES

1. Ven. Sangharakshita: *A Survey of Buddhism*, p.368. Chapter three of this book contains a very clear introduction to Pure Land Buddhism.
2. There are three principal texts relating to Sukhavati: The Greater and Lesser Sukhavati Sutras and The Amitayur Dhyana Sutra. English translations of all three are contained in *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, edited by Cowell. A more modern translation of The Amitayur Dhyana Sutra can be found in Stephan Bayer's *The Buddhist Experience: Sources and Interpretations*.

Sukhavati represents the vision of the Pure Land, the ideal archetypal realm of the Buddha Amitabha. It is a land of jewelled lotuses and wishfulfilling trees in which everything aids the growth and development of the individual. The bricks-and-mortar reality of Sukhavati has been an attempt to bring this vision into actuality. When the first building team moved into Sukhavati, nourished by this shared vision, and stood amidst the rubble and dust of the site, it was impossible to predict the size and extent of the project, or the implications of manifesting this dynamic vision and creating a Buddhist public Centre and Community.

If Sukhavati has meant anything to those involved in the project, it has meant continuous and unremitting work towards this end. Work on the one hand to transform the dilapidated and derelict building towards a finished and flourishing Centre, and work on the other hand to finance the construction of the project and to provide the goods and services necessary for the functioning of the Movement and the living of a Buddhist lifestyle.

During the first year of occupation at Sukhavati the resident Community, which grew in size to 25 workers, was primarily concerned with the construction and restoration of the building itself. This work was primarily financed by donations collected prior to the commencement of the project. After the first year, with the work far from being finished, these funds were exhausted and those engaged on the project were forced to turn to a self-financing solution and stop work on the building.

Friends' Building Service and Windhorse Transport were consequently inaugurated to recharge Sukhavati's diminished finances, and shortly afterwards Windhorse Press and Friends' Foods began operations. Labour was diverted from the building project towards these fundraising concerns and as a result little progress was made on the building, delaying the opening of the Centre for a further year.

From Begging to Business

THE PREAMBLE OF THE PURE LAND CO-OPERATIVE

We, the members of the Pure Land Co-operative Limited, have come together out of a commitment to common ideals. It is our belief that the development of individuals is the most important consideration in all human action.

We are each committed to realizing the highest degree of understanding and compassion in our own lives and feel due appreciation for those more developed than ourselves. We are each committed to taking whatever steps are necessary to further our human development and feel due appreciation for whatever truly conduces to the growth of men from whatever source it may come. We are each committed to communicating as freely and openly as possible, especially with those who share our commitment, and feel due appreciation for all those who are sincerely making an effort to evolve.

These ideals are to us the only source of full happiness for all beings, and we therefore wish to share them as widely as possible so that others may be inspired to change their lives in accordance with them and to become more truly human.

These four businesses were started with three objectives in mind. Firstly, to act as a means of growth and development for the individuals involved: this is above all the primary concern of all Buddhist activity. Secondly, to support those workers involved financially and to supply funds for the expansion of the Movement as a whole. Thirdly, to supply necessary goods and services both to the Movement and for society at large.

It is this first objective that distinguishes these commercial activities as means of Right Livelihood. Right Livelihood is the fifth stage of the Buddha's Noble Eight-fold Path, and it is significant that it is given this central place in Buddhist teaching. Buddhism is concerned with developing skilful positive mental states which include love, joy, compassion and equanimity. Work has an extremely powerful effect on one's mental states, particularly over a long period, conditioning one's mind to a considerable extent. Consequently it is essential that one's work has a positive orientation and is in fact consistent with and in harmony with the spiritual life.

A variety of occupations, such as those involved with alcohol and drugs, with weapons, slavery and selling meat are discouraged in Buddhist teaching. The conception of what Right Livelihood actually entails and consists of in practice, besides these general guide-lines, has been gradually developing in those concerned at Sukhavati since the businesses began. It is not enough just to have a business activity that does not explicitly exploit people, it must also implicitly benefit those involved, and at the same time be of genuine service to society.

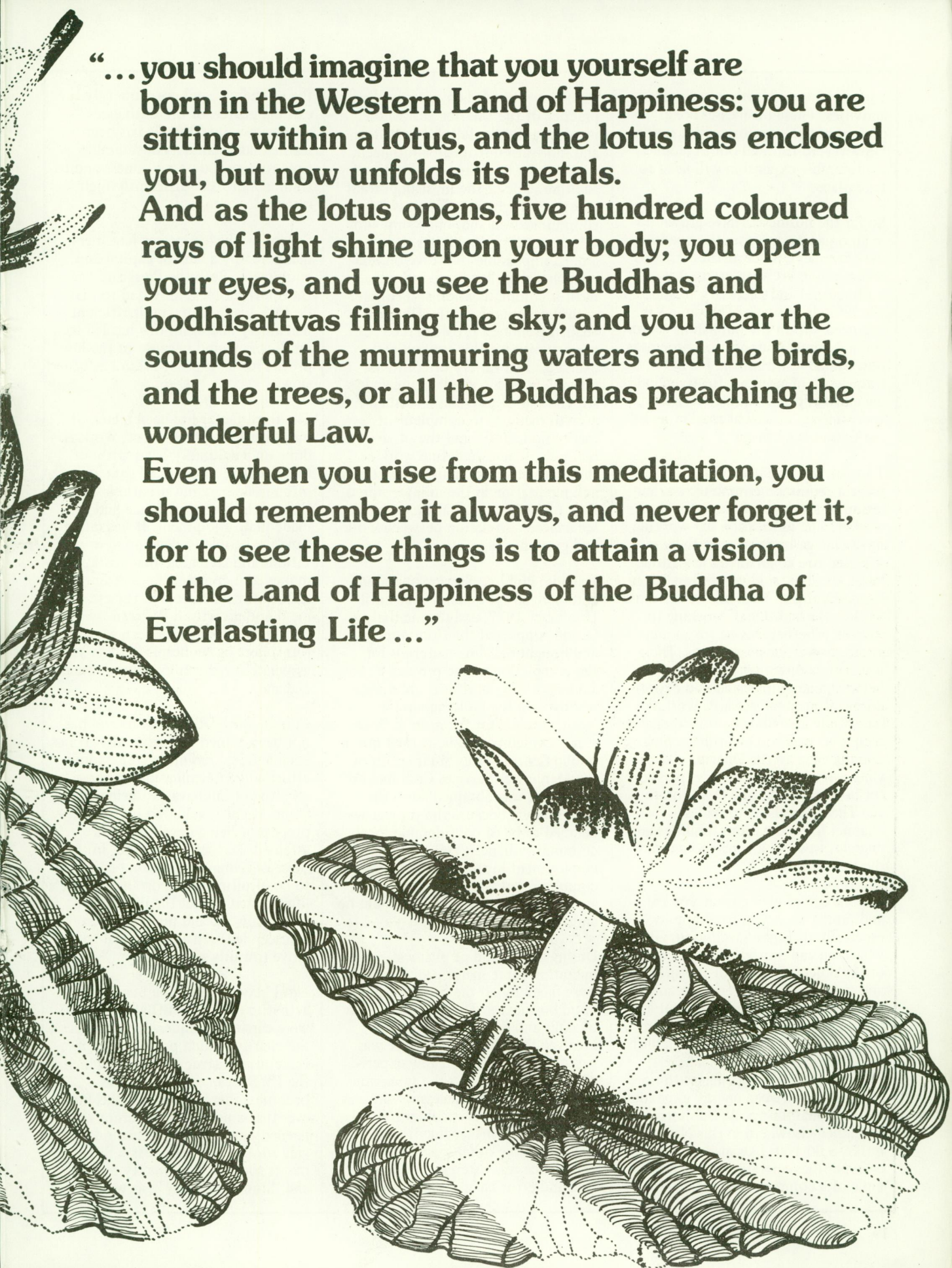
The second objective of the Right Livelihood projects is obviously financial. Money-making activities in the FWBO have grown from organizing jumble-sales and sponsored walks to running extensive commercial concerns. Money is needed not only for individual workers but also for new Centres, Communities, Retreat Centres, publications, and for



“...you should imagine that you yourself are born in the Western Land of Happiness: you are sitting within a lotus, and the lotus has enclosed you, but now unfolds its petals.

And as the lotus opens, five hundred coloured rays of light shine upon your body; you open your eyes, and you see the Buddhas and bodhisattvas filling the sky; and you hear the sounds of the murmuring waters and the birds, and the trees, or all the Buddhas preaching the wonderful Law.

Even when you rise from this meditation, you should remember it always, and never forget it, for to see these things is to attain a vision of the Land of Happiness of the Buddha of Everlasting Life ...”



a whole range of further business activities. These businesses are at present at the stage of capitalization. However, to fulfil all our objectives, considerable expansion will need to take place.

So far the businesses have grown up in an organic way from the needs of the Movement. Since all the "Friends" communities are vegetarian, it was both natural and necessary to start a wholefoods business. The same has occurred within the publishing sector, and a complete publication process is now available within the FWBO framework in germinal form, including editing, proofreading, designing, and printing, as well as marketing in the Centre bookshops.

To work in a Right Livelihood project requires a complete re-orientation of attitude for the individual worker. The motivation for working must change from an essentially self-oriented one to an altruistic attitude based on *dana* or giving and *metta* or loving-kindness. What motivates most work is the attitude of working for returns, whether this be for money, status, power, or possessions. There is usually a direct correlation between energy invested and expectations of personal reward. Working for a Right Livelihood project enables people to manifest their deepening commitment to the Dharma and provides a practical means of expression for both gratitude and devotion to the Three Jewels. It provides a channel for inclinations, abilities and energies towards a constructive and dynamic ideal.

The maxim of giving what you can and taking what you need applies especially to Right Livelihood. Giving what you can means becoming aware of the objective needs of the situation and making yourself receptive and available to these needs. It requires you to be responsive to a situation and prepared to follow through with whatever this may entail. The emphasis here is on giving, with no correlation between energy expended and personal return. As Subhuti has explained elsewhere in this Newsletter, Sukhavati like many Friends communities operates on the principle of a common purse.

Right Livelihood then, as does the practice of the Dharma as a whole, involves a re-orientation of attitude and motivation from greed to need, from taking to giving, and from self to other. One of the most important aspects of Right Livelihood is communication and fellowship with other practising Buddhists. It is almost impossible to evolve on one's own, and what facilitates growth most is communication and contact with those practising the Dharma. Right Livelihood provides the opportunity for this contact and exchange in a variety of contexts, often demanding, challenging and stimulating. It provides a further growth medium to complement meditation, study and the other methods. When we define work as the productive expenditure of energy and meditation as the uninterrupted flow of positive mental states, we can see a close correlation between work and growth.

Friends' Building Service operated commercially for over a year until December 1977, and during that period supported the Community and bought building materials for the completion of the project. From January 1978, work was once again resumed on the building, and in April, funding for the ground floor area — which was to be turned into a public Centre — was obtained from the Manpower Services Commission. This grant was obtained from the local council because the project was deemed to be of considerable local community benefit and would aid employment in the area. Thus the completion of the project was assured and an opening date could be announced.

During this period of business operation three major problems were faced by all the Right Livelihood businesses. The first was a lack of skills and experience in those involved. The Building Service was based on the skills of a few experienced individuals and the remainder had to develop the necessary skills as they worked. These problems were faced by both management and workers in the other businesses, and experience was often gained on a trial-and-error basis. This meant that

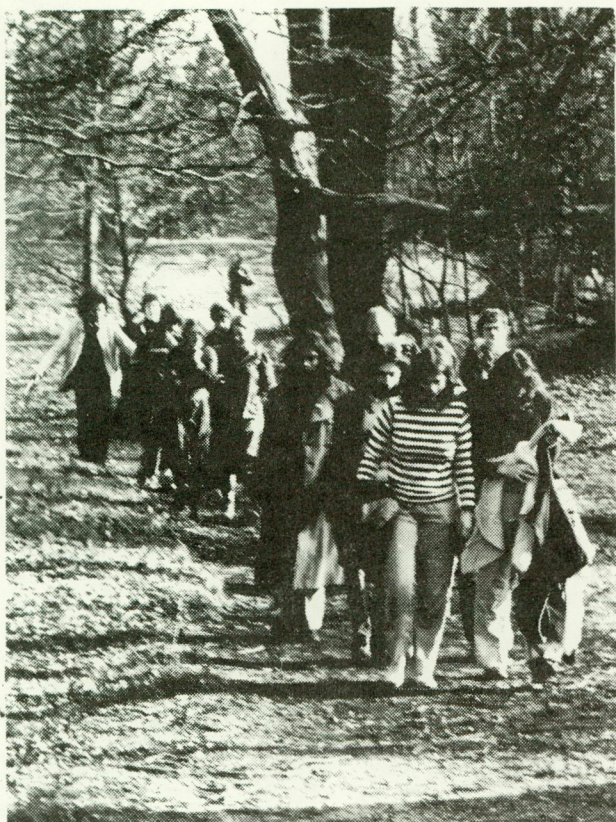
the efficiency, and consequently the earning power, of the businesses always remained low. It has been learnt that it takes a considerable time to consolidate a business and to train labour to a sufficiently high standard.

Secondly, the businesses have been hampered by a lack of capital and equipment. Both the Press and the transport business have had to make do with inadequate and inefficient machinery and again this has led to inefficiency, and because of the low profits made, capitalization has been slow.

The third factor has been a lack of initiative and commitment. Work is done on a voluntary basis without the incentive of personal gain and often in demanding situations caused through lack of experience and inadequate equipment. It has taken time for people to develop new motivations and to realize that work, money and commerce are essential and legitimate factors in the establishment and growth of Western Buddhism, since in modern society this sphere of economic activity is associated with exploitative commercialism.

Consequently Right Livelihood has not been gained automatically. It has been an ideal requiring tremendous effort and determination by those involved at Sukhavati to bring into being. Right Livelihood is still in the process of being developed and attained. Perfect Livelihood, in the sense of living by what one considers to be of ultimate importance in one's life (so that in fact the distinction between work and play has been transcended) remains an ideal to strive towards and fulfil.

Until May 1978 all the business activities of the FWBO at Sukhavati were carried on under the auspices of the charity, which provides a convenient legal structure under which the FWBO can operate. It was becoming increasingly obvious however that a new legal structure was needed: a structure that would provide for essential business requirements such as "personality at law" and "limited liability", as well as



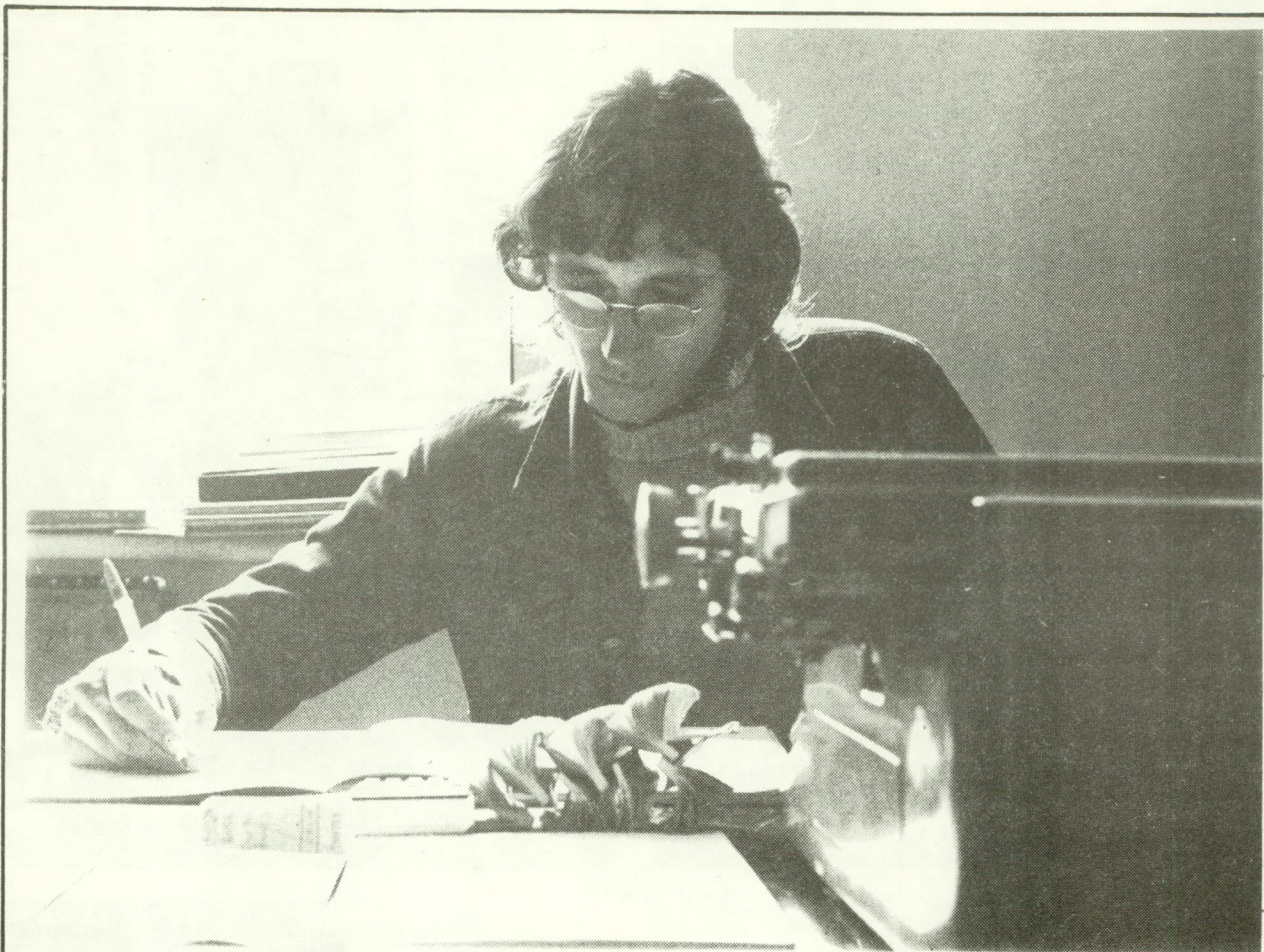
From this...



to this...



...to this



Prakasha: calculator at the ready.

expressing through its constitution Buddhist attitudes to work and livelihood.

It was decided that the Co-operative system provided many of the features we were looking for, and in May '78 the Pure Land Co-operative was registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act and effectively began its business activities on May the first, 1978.

The Pure Land Co-operative is the name of the Co-operative as a whole, and under this name the Co-operative operates using a number of trading names for each particular aspect of business carried out. Currently at Sukhavati there are: Windhorse Press; Friends' Foods, which recently opened a wholefood shop at Sukhavati; an Editorial Service, which operates both commercially and for FWBO publications; and what is still known as Wright's Hardware shop. This last is a Do-It-Yourself shop

recently acquired and yet to be re-named, round the corner from Sukhavati. These four businesses together employ a dozen workers and there are plans – when circumstances permit – to open a restaurant and bookshop as facilities for the Centre and as services for the area.

There are two basic types of Co-operative. Firstly, the “consumer co-op” where the co-op is owned and managed by those people who buy the produce and use the services offered by the Co-operative. They usually receive a dividend from the profits. The Co-op found down any High Street is of this type. Secondly, there are the “producers” or “industrial co-operatives” in which those who work in the Co-op actually own and manage the Co-op themselves. The Pure Land Co-op is of this second type, and operates under a constitution provided by the Industrial Common Ownership Movement. This second type of Co-operative is

distinguished from other business structures by two essential differences. Firstly, the Co-op is entirely owned by its members, and any person employed within the Co-operative is entitled to apply for membership. When a person becomes a member, he receives an ownership share in the Co-operative. Only one share per person is issued, and this can neither be bought nor sold, and is terminated when membership of the Co-op ceases. This means that although members hold ownership shares, the Co-op is in effect owned collectively. The second difference is that the Co-op is managed and controlled entirely by members. This means that the usual alienated split between management and workers should be overcome and an incentive is given to all workers to take responsibility for the business and participate fully.

Within the organizational structure of the Co-operative there are the two

separate levels of employee and member. The stage of employee is preliminary to that of member, and employees do not have the same rights of ownership and control. Members are employees who have assented to the preamble of the Co-operative that embodies its spirit and direction, who have received the approval of the general meeting composed of other members. The Pure Land Co-operative is managed by monthly general meetings for all employees and weekly management meetings for those elected by the general meeting to sit on the Co-operative management committee.

All working members are encouraged actively to participate in management decisions, and there is a major emphasis on communication, participation and involvement between members within the Co-operative. Because each member is entitled to both ownership and management control, each member is in a sense responsible for the Co-operative as a whole. Consequently individual responsibility is of paramount importance within the Co-operative. The functioning of the Co-operative as a

Co-operative is dependent on each member exercising considerable commitment, initiative, involvement and responsibility within the work situation. This is one primary reason why the Co-operative structure was chosen. The emphasis of the FWBO is always towards the growth and development of true individuality and in this emphasis the Co-operative shares.

Since the Co-operative was started, Right Livelihood has moved on to a much firmer foundation and considerable commercial progress has been made. Furthermore, the attitudes of those involved have shown extensive change, and the three primary objectives of the businesses, namely personal growth, financial expansion and customer service have been brought nearer to a reality. The business projects, however, have a much greater potential than has been indicated so far. Right Livelihood not only concerns the microcosm of particular businesses, but also the macrocosm of all the social, political and economic aspects of society as a whole. Right Livelihood is concerned not only with the complete transfor-

mation of the individual through his particular experience of work but with the complete transformation of society in every way. It is concerned with the establishment of an ethical society based on individual values and on spiritual ideals.

We have realised that it is not just enough to work on our own growth and development, nor on the other hand to work to change the fabric of society alone. There must be an emphasis on the transformation of both self and world. The transformation of self will be achieved primarily through spiritual practice, and in particular through meditation. The transformation of the world towards an ideal society will be implemented by individuals working together in mutual association on various projects, and striving to live a comprehensive lifestyle based on Buddhist principles. Through doing so they will thus influence and change, through contact, example, and direct action, the social, political, and economic spheres of society.

PRAKASHA

TRANSCENDING THE EXISTING ALTERNATIVES

From the very start the Ven. Sangharakshita has shown a keen interest in progress at Sukhavati. I recently spoke with him about the project, in his flat there.

Nagabodhi: Did you ever have a London Centre on the scale of 'Sukhavati' in mind before we found the Old Fire Station in Bethnal Green?

Sangharakshita: Yes indeed. It was the subject of discussion in the very early days of the 'Friends', in fact within the first six months. There were several Friends in those days who envisaged a centre on this scale, and one particular Order member who even spent his spare time drawing up elaborate plans of the Centre of his dreams – with lots and lots of shrine rooms, – one for the Theravada, one for the Mahayana, and one for the Vajrayana, – as well as several meeting rooms and, I think, residential accommodation. There was also a hall for Yoga, another for Karate, an office, and committee rooms, and so on! So the idea that there should be a really big, comprehensive FWBO Centre in London was

certainly there at the very beginning. But unfortunately none of these Friends realised what a long haul it would be before we could have any such Centre. Some of them seemed to expect that it would emerge within a year or so, and when it didn't they felt quite disappointed, got discouraged, and in some cases left us. I personally thought a big centre an excellent idea, and would have liked something like that, but being perhaps more practical, I realised that it was going to take very much longer, and that a very firm foundation would have to be laid.

What do you see as being the most important reason for our having such a big Centre?

Well, the fact is that we are in London, and London is a very big place: a place of 12 million people. You need – I won't even say a large Centre – you

need large Centres if you are going to reach even a fraction of the people. I look at it in this practical sort of way – not in terms of having a prestige project, which would be quite against our basic philosophy. We just need a place where we can have lots of classes for lots of people because, even with thousands of people coming in, that will only be a tiny fraction of the total population of London. So if we are to function at all in a place like London we simply need a relatively bigger Centre. In fact I'd like to see at least four more centres on the scale of 'Sukhavati': one in central London, and one each in the North, South and West London. We already have the germ of something in the West, in the form of 'Mandala', and I would like to see it developing into the western counterpart of 'Sukhavati'. But the fact that we have four or five large Centres should not preclude smaller, perhaps more specialised Centres catering to certain localities.

Do you think that the facilities offered by 'Sukhavati' might enable us to adopt a more experimental approach?

I don't think we should experiment. I don't see any need to experiment, actually. I think we have quite enough to be getting on with for the time being, quite enough to implement. It might be that as a result of the implementation of the central activities, – classes, courses, and so on, – certain experiments may occur, or might be seen to be desirable, but I don't think that we should consciously set out to be experimental: that's rather a modern over-preoccupation. I have nothing against T'ai Ch'i classes, for example, but I think they will be quite peripheral, – more peripheral than Hatha Yoga perhaps, – but I wouldn't regard either of them as experimental. We know that certain people would be helped by such classes; we also know that they are quite peripheral to our specifically Buddhist activities.

Maybe these more peripheral activities will help to attract people to us?

I think we should watch that. We should have a wide range of activities, but I think we should be careful not to try to attract people by going more than half-way to meet them. I think that what is essentially going to attract people is the spirit of the place – the enthusiasm, the energy, the life; these are the things that are going to attract people. If one isn't careful one just starts sliding into the gimmicky. I remember in this connection, just after I got back from India, – when I was at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, – I read in one of the colour supplements about an experiment that had been carried out by four or five Church of England clergymen. They had taken over an old church and started up a whole range of activities to try to attract people. They had pop concerts, they had darts matches, they had film

shows, all sorts of things. But Nick Stacey, one of the clergymen, said he had to admit that they had not succeeded in attracting the young people. My comment after reading this was "Pity they didn't think of trying religion!" You see? It's no use trying to attract people in these sorts of ways unless there's really something to attract them to. And if you have got something to attract them to, and if that something really is in itself attractive, you don't really need these other things.

In what way do you think that the size of the Community living at Sukhavati will affect things?

Size does create its own problems sometimes, you know. But if those problems are resolved, and I take it that in this case they will be, – if they arise at all, in fact, – then the bigger Spiritual Community will simply be able to exert a stronger and more widely extensive influence. And in a place like London you need something like that. Even if you had a hundred Order members living under the same roof at 'Sukhavati' it would not be too many. A community of a hundred would not be, say, twice as influential as a community of fifty: it would be several times more influential.

For the people living here, will it be a much more powerful situation than anything else we have?

It will be the opportunity of a lifetime! Because they will be in a highly positive situation. They will be living in a strong spiritual Community, and the community itself will be functioning within the context of a positive group... They will have this place to live in, to work in, to meet people in... I can't imagine anything more positive than that for the individual involved, and especially for the individual Order member. They will experience it as a real *Sukhavati*. It's possible that there could not be a situation equally positive and inspiring anywhere in the Buddhist world. I know from my own experience that there is not a situation for them like this in India. Perhaps in the old days in Tibet, in certain monasteries, they might have found it, but we know that those monasteries are now closed.

A lot of people living in 'Sukhavati' will be involved in administration and in teaching at the Centre. How important do you think it is that there should be a proportion of the community members doing money earning work?

I think we have to be careful how we describe or define work. Running the Centre and taking classes is, of course, still work. But I think we have to avoid a situation such as has arisen in the East, where full-time Buddhists have become dependent on – for want of a better word – charity, and where they tend to be fully subsidised. No doubt this is sometimes



—but more than a family atmosphere.

good and sometimes necessary, but I think it can happen that those who are subsidised just become a bit slothful. I think the relationship between work and money-earning has to be sorted out, but work,—including physical work,—I would tend to regard as an integral part of every individual's spiritual development. I therefore think we have to be a bit careful about developing a class of Order member who is only, as it were, intellectually occupied, or only occupied in teaching. However useful that may be I think that somebody only occupied in that way could develop in a very one-sided fashion. So I would tend to favour those who are taking classes and giving lectures also, for their own benefit, being involved in some kind of physical activity — whether associated with the actual earning of money or not. It may eventually be that we don't have, under the same roof, in 'Sukhavati' people who are working in the co-operatives as well, but if 'Sukhavati' and its associative organs is going to represent the Movement in its entirety, then clearly there will have to be co-operatives closely associated with 'Sukhavati'. I would like to have, in this area, the Centre, the Community, and the co-ops. All the people involved in these things should certainly be attached to 'Sukhavati', so that the whole thing adds up to a complete FWBO alternative society.

A little while ago you mentioned the 'positive group'. It does already look as if a whole culture is going to sprout up around 'Sukhavati'. Do you think

that this should be approached with caution?

No. I see it more as something to be approached with great enthusiasm. In this connection, I was recently reading in a book on Buddhism in the modern world, about a Japanese sect who have coined the term "the third civilisation". They see themselves as working for the third civilisation: third in the sense of being neither capitalist nor socialist in economic or political terms. It did occur to me that this sort of phrase might suit us: a third culture, a third civilisation: something which transcends existing alternatives, existing oppositions and conflicts. The culture that will grow up around 'Sukhavati' will transcend the existing alternatives in its positivity, in the sheer healthiness of its attitude. It is very difficult for people to come into contact with a group which is, in a sense, more than a group, which provides more than a 'family atmosphere' in which a number of people merely accept some rather ordinary group norms. I feel that the positive group that we should offer should transcend that sort of thing; it should be much more vibrant, much more dynamic, much more truly progressive — even though still falling short of the Spiritual Community. The positive group will be the outer circle surrounding the spiritual community. Those who make up the positive group will be in harmony with the spiritual community; they'll not only not get in its way, but actually be supportive of it, financially, psychologically, in every way. But this is something which will need to



Lokamitra and Kularatna: leaving the building site for sunnier climes.

be held continually in existence. The spiritual community itself does not remain in existence unless it contains, or is at least in contact with, some who cannot fall back. So the positive group, by its very nature as a group, can always become a negative group – unless this is prevented by the positive influence constantly radiating from the spiritual community. Without a strong spiritual community there is no possibility of a positive group.

Do you see 'Sukhavati' functioning in any way as a training centre?

I don't think it will be a special training centre, so much, for the Friend and the mitra. They will come along more or less as Friends and mitras come along to other centres, but with the advantage of coming along to a bigger, stronger, more positive, more spiritually intense centre – which clearly is a very big advantage. But I think it will be a training centre more for the newly ordained Order member who wants an opportunity to sort of understudy the Order members who are taking the classes and running things. In that way he will be able to learn the ropes for the time when he himself can play a more active part in the running of things, either at 'Sukhavati' or elsewhere.

Do you see 'Sukhavati' as becoming a kind of 'centre' of the Movement?

It will be a centre of the Movement only to the ex-

tent that it is not simply bigger, but more positive and more intense in every way, and therefore giving a sort of natural lead. Inasmuch as 'Sukhavati' is bigger and is situated in London it is more likely that that sort of lead will be given by 'Sukhavati'. It is not impossible, however, that it could be given by another centre, even a smaller one, if that centre is so alive and so intense and active that everybody sort of grants its natural superiority, and sort of looks to it as a sort of model. After all, every centre should be a model, every centre should be a showcase; every centre should be a microcosm of the total Movement. So it isn't as if that sort of central position is necessarily attached to 'Sukhavati', but inasmuch as it will be the biggest centre, with the largest concentration of Order members and activities, it is to be expected that it will be the main spiritual powerhouse of the Movement, and that therefore others will look to it, informally, as having that sort of value; even though they remain responsible for their own centres, even though they remain organisationally autonomous and financially independent.

I think we will find people coming to 'Sukhavati' from other centres and spending time there, getting new ideas, getting very enthused and inspired, and then going back to their own centres with those new ideas and with that renewed inspiration. 'Sukhavati' will be like a heart. The function of the heart is to pump the blood through the body: keep it in circulation.

CENTRES and BRANCHES

PADMALOKA NORFOLK

It is now almost 18 months since Padmaloka became an autonomous centre of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. Since then a lot has happened here, and many changes have taken place. Padmaloka has assumed its role within the FWBO and a spiritual community has been formed.

Looking back over this time, we see Padmaloka has been put to a number of different uses. It is the Venerable Sangharakshita's "headquarters", where he is able to write and to receive people, and where for the first time since his return from India he has been able to gather together all his books, thanngas, images, etc.

The Office of the Western Buddhist Order is also located here. Its function is to help the Ven. Sangharakshita with his correspondence, which is continually increasing, as well as to deal with enquiries concerning the Order.

A number of people have stayed at Padmaloka, some for just a few days, others for several months. Order members, Mitras and Friends from this country and abroad came to share the quiet and peaceful atmosphere of the place, and either joined the community members in their work or got on with their own study, meditation, etcetera.

Padmaloka has also, of course, functioned as a retreat and seminar centre. Last year we held: 1 three-week Christmas retreat, 1 two-week summer retreat, 3 ten-day retreats, 2 ten-day seminars, 1 visualisation retreat for Order members and 3 Chairmen's conferences. We have recently held our first four-week retreat this August, and a two-day event for Order members, Mitras and Friends, and there are further retreats in October and December.

In addition to all this we have had an Open Day, several full moon celebrations, a special meeting of New Zealand Order members and 14 Upasaka ordinations.

The biggest change that has taken place at Padmaloka is the change in the composition of the resident community which is, of course, a men's community. Since last year six of the regular members have left, and four new people have taken their place. All those at present staying at Padmaloka are dedicated to establishing a real spiritual community, all the necessary conditions for spiritual growth and development being available to us here. All we have to do is make use of them. In addition to the pleasant, spacious and peaceful surroundings we have a sangha, we have friendship and metta, and also our teacher and guide, whose inspiration and wisdom cannot be praised enough.

We also have a really fine means of right livelihood in the form of

'Padmaloka Candles'. Up till now much of the surplus from this venture has had to be used to expand the candle-making workshop and to buy new materials. However by the end of the year, when the Christmas market will have been exhausted, we expect to have a considerable profit at our disposal for other projects.

Although Padmaloka has been well utilised during the last year or so, it is only now perhaps that we are beginning to see what the potential of the place really is, and it is our hope that Padmaloka will soon become one of the main centres of inspiration for the Movement, and thus contribute to the spread of Buddhism throughout this country and the world.

Yuvaraj

INDIA

The last few weeks have seen the conception of a spiritual community in Poona. We held a six day retreat, at the end of which came five mitra ceremonies. This was undoubtedly the highlight of the retreat.

Apart from the fact that people here love ceremonies, it had much significance. Firstly, when I came here last year, and also this year, I emphasised the importance of spiritual community, not only if people really want to develop as individuals, but if the Dharma is to flourish once again in Maharashtra (the large number of Buddhist caves in Maharashtra indicates a flourishing spiritual community here centuries ago). Secondly it marked the return of the Ven. Sangharakshita. As I've said before, he had such an effect on these people. All who came into contact with him, and were old enough to understand, remember him very well. He is the only person who many feel can do anything in Maharashtra. Although he will only be visiting India from time to time his presence, approach and understanding are communicated, at least to some extent, through the Order.

The retreat went well. It's hard for retreats not to. However, we have much to learn yet about local customs and habits. Two hours every day were devoted to studying the Karyana Metta Sutta. Not only was the importance of positive emotion, of metta in the spiritual life, communicated,



The Ven. Sangharakshita at Padmaloka

but also the fact that each of these suttas was a teaching in itself. Many of them, if really understood, if really followed, could lead one to Enlightenment itself.

The weeks before the retreat were spent giving four public lectures, taking meditation and study classes, and occasionally visiting local viharas. Much of my energy went into finding suitable accommodation. This is really difficult in Poona, because of the tourists and the large number of foreign students. Often I was asked to pay a monthly rent far in excess of our total monthly allowance. When we return to Poona from Ahmedabad, in November, we will concentrate on finding a centre, and on holding a few classes a week.

Lokamitra

HERUKA GLASGOW

It is hard to write a report on what has been happening here in Glasgow as things happen so fast, and at each moment there is more activity than usual as right livelihoods are beginning to take shape.

"Gardening Friends" is now working following "Friends Gardening" of Edinburgh and is supporting two members of the community and providing the centre with an unsteady source of income. Hopefully a printing business and a wholefood shop (we have made a bid for a shop in the city centre) will soon be able to ease the continual financial crisis.

By the time this is printed we should be running classes in the city centre. This depends on whether we can raise £500 for the rent deposit but it's ideal for making a bigger splash in Glasgow with meditation classes and maybe even yoga classes which would pay the rent. We have been looking for a place like this for a long time now so the money needed will be found.

The community at Heruka has done a quick reshuffle so there will be less Order members here in Glasgow while there will be more for them to do when the new centre opens. But we are anticipating the death, and rebirth as an Order member, of Andrew Galloway, in October, which will mean a larger Order here. There's also a weekend retreat coming up soon and there will be



"We can't be defeated."

some mitra ceremonies then which means a larger sangha in contact with the Order.

It looks like the only thing that could threaten the expansion of FWBO Glasgow is lack of money, and even that isn't very important for, as Danavira said recently, "we can't be defeated, we can only have setbacks."

Robin Cairns

GRDHRAKUTA MANCHESTER

How exciting it is to watch something grow. How much more exciting to be a part of that growth, to be instrumental in that growth, and by so being, to grow oneself as an individual. Anyone who has lived in a Friends' community and worked for the FWBO in some way must have experienced such a process, and Grdhrakuta is no exception. The last two months have indeed been an exciting time for us - a time in which we have seen various shoots budding forth in all directions.

Firstly, the members of the community, the seeds of any FWBO venture, upon which all other healthy growth is dependent. We have had a few changes in personnel recently, with Ratnajyoti moving to Scotland and Morgan Findlay,

one time president of (amongst other things) the Dundee Buddhist Group, joining us. Morgan will be ordained by the time you read this, which will bring the number of Order members in Manchester back up to three. We also have with us Clive, a young Mancunian who is here for a short while to see what living in a Friends' community is all about.

Classes are tremendous at the moment. Our last meditation course brought such a response that in order to accommodate everyone we had to hold three separate classes a week. Out of those who attended, twenty-five went on to take part in the Dharma course, now in its third week. Next week we make history when we take our "regulars" on the first ever Manchester FWBO weekend retreat, at Tyddyn Rhydderch. History was made in another way on the Order/Mitra weekend at Padmaloka on the 29th-30th July when Ian Alexander was given a Mitra ceremony by Bhante, making him our first "home grown" Mitra.

All our activities are run from a small, rather seedy house, in an area roughly analogous to that of Hackney in London. We need two things: first, premises for a Centre, somewhere central, and large enough to do justice to the ample population of Greater Manchester. Second, a large house where we can accommodate a few more people who wish to live in a FWBO community. Of course we need money to carry out these projects, and by the time you read this "Rainbow Cleaning" (a complete carpet and upholstery cleaning service) should be brightening up the homes of Manchester, and bringing in the necessary pennies.

When I was on my solitary retreat last January, I used to spend a good part of the early evening each day trying to light a fire with pieces of paper and damp wood. Usually it took a long time for the wood to take, and I would kneel by the hearth, trying to be patient, and coaxing some life into it. Eventually, a few pieces of wood flickered into life and I knew that, with a bit more patience and enough fuel, I would have a blazing fire for the rest of the evening. For many months we have been trying to get something going here in Manchester and now we are seeing a few flames spring up around us. All we need is a bit more fuel and we'll be ablaze.

Ratnaguna

AMARAVATI

WANSTEAD

Once again change and movement is the order of the day here at Amaravati. All of us attended at least part of the Women's Summer Retreat at Mandarava which culminated in two ordinations. The thirty or so of us present in Mandarava's lovely new shrine room for the public ordinations, sat in an emotion-filled silence as Bhante led Maggie Oakshott and Pirkko-Liisa Key through the beautiful and moving ceremony which saw them reborn as Vimala and Shridevi respectively. Back home in London changes are taking place. Sanghadevi has moved to Beulah in Bethnal Green where she will soon be joined by Shridevi, who is at the moment staying at Amaravati after visiting her native Finland. They will both be part of the team working at the new Centre at Sukhavati. With other people moving on to pastures new (Anne Farnham to Manchester, Anne Murphy to Mandarava and Helen Johnson to Devon), and Diana MacEwan moving up from Brighton and myself from Glasgow, the community now consists of ten women - five of whom are Order members.

Money is still short (this being a disease commonly found in FWBO circles) but we are now in the process of forming our Co-operative and work is going well with both our right livelihood teams. A steady flow of orders for Baggy Pants, and loose covers, is coming into Kusa Cushions who are also working at the moment on cushions for the London Buddhist Centre. Vimala and Hilary have recently finished their second painting and decorating job, leaving behind very satisfied customers indeed; various new jobs are in the pipeline. With Vimala and Hilary going out into people's homes to recreate their kitchens and bedrooms, Joan going into people's homes to recover their chairs and recurtain their windows and myself working in the local public library, we seem to be moving into a more outgoing phase and making Amaravati's presence felt, at least a little, in the local area. Recently we travelled down to Brighton where Marichi performed a blessing-of-a-wedding ceremony. Everyone there seemed to enjoy the ceremony, Buddhists

and non-Buddhists alike, especially the yells of "Sadhu" and the throwing of flowers. Hopefully we will leave in our wake a feeling of positivity and cheerfulness and the realisation that Buddhists are not some strange outrageous breed of people after all.

Community activities keep us busy and out of mischief. On Thursday nights we have a study class where we are making a systematic study of the Bodhicaryavatara, using the text and the 'Endlessly Fascinating Cry' which is the transcript of a study made on the text in 1973. These classes are interesting and at times inspiring and we have now reached the part dealing with the Perfection of Contemplation. We are holding Speaker's Classes and Community Evenings on alternate Friday nights and these are proving valuable. Our first proper Weekend Retreat here (others we've held have been purely Working Retreats) took place here in October and there will also be more Mitra Days. Quite a few women are coming to visit us over the next few months, staying for a period of a week or so at a time.

Recently Joan and Kay moved the shrine to a different part of the shrineroom. It now sits in front of the french windows leading into the back garden and the Buddha image has a beautiful backcloth of vine leaves. The mornings and evenings smell of autumn now, leaves (and pears) fall from the trees in our back garden and it's a good time to be together, to be part of a positive, caring community. Life is good here, here in the place "the very thought of which fills one with Bliss".

Anne McMillan

ARYATARA

SURREY

It leaves me with a sense of wonder that things here can just go on getting better and better, as they have done ever since I joined the Aryatara community early this year, but that does seem to be the case. The opportunities for growth offered by working on our shop and cafe projects within the context of the Sangha have been innumerable.

Now, with shop and cafe well established, both having many regular customers and takings following an upward curve, we are entering

another ambitious phase: taking on and restoring the burnt-out shop next to 'Friends Foods' to enable the shop and cafe to expand. This was the part of our original project which earlier this year we felt too much for us to take on, especially in view of the relatively short period of guaranteed tenure. Now it even seems possible that this will be extended by two years.

But we could not have considered taking this on without the manpower and skill necessary for such an undertaking, in addition to running the shop and cafe, and this, only a couple of months ago, we did not have, especially in view of the much-lamented departure of three Order members who had given an incredible amount to us all: Vessantara, Nagabodhi and Jyotipala (the last only temporarily, we hope!)

The fact that we are about to start this new venture points to the most encouraging feature of the last couple of months: that the Aryatara community is now reformed, replenished, increased and probably filled with more potential than ever before. Most of the seven new members have only come into contact with the Movement since we started work on the shop, and they have brought to the community a feeling of youthful vigour which is a joy to experience. In addition, and of no less importance, there are now five women intent upon setting up a new community in the area, if only suitable accommodation can be found - this is perhaps the most pressing need for the overall welfare of FWBO Surrey, and the search is going ahead full-pace.

The vitality of the situation here is reflected in a really enlivening series of weekend and day retreats which we have been having, and, needless to say, in our regular weekly classes. This is especially so in the Wednesday night beginners' meditation class, which is invariably the high point of the week. It's really good to see so many open, receptive people turning up, and to feel that the Dharma is getting through to many of them. As long as we continue - and increase - our progress in the work projects, Centre and communities, and above all as individuals, we must surely attract many more new people.

There's certainly no time to sit on our laurels, only perhaps to catch our breath for renewed

effort. But, the more the better, as far as I'm concerned - it's really a privilege to be here.

John Wakeman

VAJRADHATU NORWICH

As is probably the case with many centres at the moment we have been concerned with raising £1000 towards the Tyn-y-ddol meditation centre in Wales. In order to do this we set up our mobile kitchen which travelled around various fairs throughout the summer selling vegetarian food. After a promising start our fortunes took a dive as we made a loss of £50 on the third fair and merely broke even on the fourth. It looked as if by the end of the summer we might have found ourselves in the anomalous position of simply having raised ourselves £1000 worth of debts in our attempts to raise that sum for Tyn-y-ddol, but fortunately the final two fairs made a total profit of £900, which means that although we still have £1000 to raise for Tyn-y-ddol we have paid off most of our debts and have acquired £1600 worth of equipment which will be used much more extensively on a national basis next summer. Consequently as the autumn sets in we are about to embark on our second, though less adventurous, attempt to raise that elusive sum with a sponsored walk, a 'vegetarian feast' and a 'work-a-month' project planned for the coming months.

Recently there has been much discussion and enthusiasm generated amongst the Norwich Friends about the need for further right livelihood schemes. Nothing concrete has yet materialised, but hopefully one or two more businesses will be established by the new year. At the Norwich Meditation Centre we managed to maintain a fairly full programme throughout the summer despite various Order members and mitras disappearing to retreats of one sort or another throughout July, August and September. Our six week meditation course conducted at the end of July and throughout August by Mahamati was fully booked in spite of the apparently unfavourable time of year.

As we swing into the full autumn programme our classes are fuller



Right Livelihood in Norwich

than they have ever been with between 20 and 30 people attending each of the four evening classes held Monday to Thursday. In addition to these 'public' classes, there are mitra study classes, and once more Ven. Sangharakshita is holding a speakers class on alternate Saturday evenings at the Assembly House, which also serves as the venue for the occasional public talk given by myself. Once more invitations are coming to speak in schools and I shall be giving my third talk in ten months to sixth formers from Bowthorpe School.

However, the most noteworthy event to take place in recent months was the conferring of the Upasika ordination upon one of our Friends, Jaya Chippis, now Punyavati, at a retreat at Broomhouse Farm on the last day of September and the first of October.

Devamitra

MANDALA WEST LONDON

Over in west London we seem to be having more and more contact with the West Country, and we recently organised the large three-week summer retreat at Toddington near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, as reported elsewhere in this newsletter. A fortnight after the end of the retreat some of us were back again in Cheltenham, this

time at the Town Hall, for "THINK 78, Cheltenham's festival for creative thinking and living", at which, along with the Campaign for Real Bread, Atlanteans, Human Cybernetics, Ley Lines, Theosophists and fifty-eight others, the FWBO had a stand and held meditation classes on both days of the festival. On the second day Devamitra gave a lecture. The event was on a smaller scale than the Festival of Mind and Body, which with its "well it's all One anyway" philosophy, it in some ways resembled, but its smaller scale and provincial setting improved the atmosphere, and I think a number of good contacts were made with local people, especially through the meditation classes, which were well attended.

Back in London two things had happened to transform the whole situation for the FWBO in West London. The first was the ordination of Anandajyoti who, as Tony Tribe, has been into the Friends ever since the days when we met twice weekly in a tiny room in the Quaker meeting hall in Ealing. The second was the ordination of Virabhadra, one time Will Stones, a student doctor who will shortly be spending three months in Indian hospitals, one of them in Poona, as part of his training before qualifying next year. Anandajyoti means "Joyful Light" or "Radiant Bliss"; Virabhadra means "Auspicious Hero" or "Friend of Heroes". This means that we now have a full chapter of Order members in West London, four of whom are living at Ratnadvipa.

As you might expect, such a pooling of energy and commitment, coming at a time of year when many people feel refreshed by summer holidays or whatever, and feel they might like to try meditation or even Buddhism, has had its effect on the Centre, and classes and courses so far this session have been attended by record numbers. We are also, at the time of writing, hot on the trail of a new centre.

To provide a legal and organisational platform for all our future right livelihood projects, the 'Raft Co-operative' was inaugurated in September. The 'Raft' includes our removals business, and the community is about to take another step by launching a wholefood shop. It will be called Friends Foods, which will mean three Friends Foods wholefood shops in London.

Kamalashila

CORNWALL

As a regular visitor to Cornwall, and the Mitras and Friends living there, I am able to appreciate how much they have struggled under difficult conditions, and rejoice in their merits. Friends meeting in Cornwall live over a wide area - the most distant live about 90 miles apart - and they all live far from the activities of the larger Centres which provide so much support and inspiration. But nevertheless the FWBO has an unquestioned presence in Cornwall and both as individuals and a wide-spread community, Mitras and Friends continue to blossom.

After contact with other members of the spiritual community over the summer period at retreats, study weekends and on visits to communities, many Friends returned to Cornwall with fresh inspiration and renewed enthusiasm or at least something to think about. As a consequence activities have blossomed. Once again, after over a year, the two regular weekly meditation classes will be held on FWBO premises. A building with fairly primitive facilities has been rented in St. Austell and is being refurbished to provide a shrine room and a reception room. The new centre will house a small library, and a local newsletter which includes articles and poems has been launched, and is available at all centres. As well as the advantages of these new amenities the future programme of events has been revitalised by a series of six-weekly retreats, planned into the new year. In December Upasaka Devamitra an Order member from the Norwich centre, will be visiting for a week to lead study groups, give talks and chair discussions. It is hoped that this will be the first of a number of such visits by various Order members. None of these activities can happen without finance and so fundraising is also a major concern. There are no full-time workers for the Movement and so income has been derived in recent weeks from a benefit dinner and a sponsored walk.

Through continued effort the FWBO in Cornwall thrives and for a visitor there is the pleasure and excitement of seeing how a seed of the Dharma has sprouted and taken root.

Manjuvajra

AMITAYUS BRIGHTON

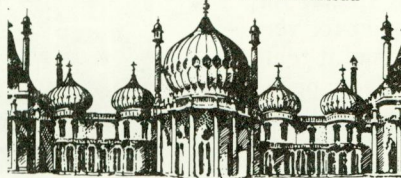
As summer matured into autumn, declaring its transformation in leaves of golden brown, so the community in Brighton matures, surely as the turning of the season's wheel.

Classes are going well. The shrine room at George Street bulges with newcomers on beginners' evenings. The 'regulars' class is well attended and has a feeling of solidity. We are now fortunate to have Surata with us in Brighton, teaching a full yoga evening. After a break in the summer, mitra study has begun again and proves a source of energetic discussion, with great promise for further development.

We have recently formed a limited company, Windhorse Enterprises Ltd, to act as parent company for our businesses. Although legally a company, our internal policy of operations will be along co-operative lines. The decorating business develops steadily as the individual members learn the skills of their new trade. They also get on very well together which holds good for the future. Our newest venture, a gardening business, also blooms. Windhorse Bookshop now supports two people; summer trade was fantastic, the shop gradually becomes more and more like an oriental emporium and Christmas trade should be better still. The restaurant, Sunrise, too is flourishing. A lot of effort has been needed to bring all this about, and we still need more fulltime cooks, but our working situations are alive and creative and offer a really worthwhile right livelihood to Friends.

Mangala spoke in the last issue of the Newsletter about experiencing the life of a spiritual community in a dynamic way. In our present stage of consolidation and optimism we must surely continue, and more than continue - to grow.

Dharmananda



GOLGONOOZA EAST LONDON

A report "from Golgonooza the spiritual fourfold London eternal, in immense labours and sorrows, ever building, ever falling" Which is to say that the path of true community-building doesn't always run smoothly).

There have been many changes at Golgonooza since the last report - not the least of which has been the turnover in personnel. John Rooney has moved out to "The Triangle", a nearby association of squatting-type households, and his place has been taken by Devaraja who brings with him his designing and painting skills, his film making project and (not least!) his earning capacity. At more or less the same time we had a six-week visit from Sarvamitra, a Finnish Order member who injected a welcome good humour and openness to daily life as well as rapidly developing into a promising plasterer. To mark his departure, along with several other FWBO Finns returning home, we threw a "Fondue Farewell Party" in our newly habitable banqueting hall. We've also had a longish visit from Andrew Winkler, an Australian Mitra here studying jewellery making and, more recently, further changes have occurred with Manjuvajra's departure and Virananda's arrival. For many months Manjuvajra has been a mainstay of the community, financing the work and administrating Golgonooza's affairs - whilst taking an active part in study groups, retreats, etc. He hopes to form a new community nearby with Punya and Nagabodhi (who is at the moment bedded down on our floor). We hope Manjuvajra's new situation works out well but we miss him. Virananda will be keeping our books in future and working for Windhorse Press.

This wave of new faces has meant that the building work has leaped ahead (at times!) and most of the heavy jobs have now been finished. But it's not all roses: the constant comings and goings have disturbed that delicate flower, the community spirit and we are left, at the time of writing, in a dispersed and divided state, like Enion, "wailing on the margins of Non-Entity". To be fair - the function of Golgonooza is changing: up to now we have had the building

work above all else as our common project. Now that the work is near-



Sarvamitra with Devaraja

ing completion we lack a specifically Golgonooza activity. The theatre group, Golden Drum, has perished amidst the bricks, bags of cement and weeks of hard labour and now that the dust is settling we find that Siddhiratna is working more than full time at graphic design, Rintrah is mostly out teaching, rehearsing and performing, and Luvah is hard at work saving up for his imminent trip to India. Our dreams of music-theatre performances, poetry readings, painting groups, workshops and the like remain dreams. Sometimes it seems a bit grim but we're hanging on, we haven't forgotten why we're here. It's a reminder once again that a community needs something in common more than just the good will of its members, needs something greater to look to than the smooth running of community life, needs a joint project, an activity. It's a reminder that Golgonooza, the city of "Art & Manufacture" is "ever building, ever decaying desolate" and that its builder,

Los, the creative imagination, is often driven to complete his task "in howling woe".



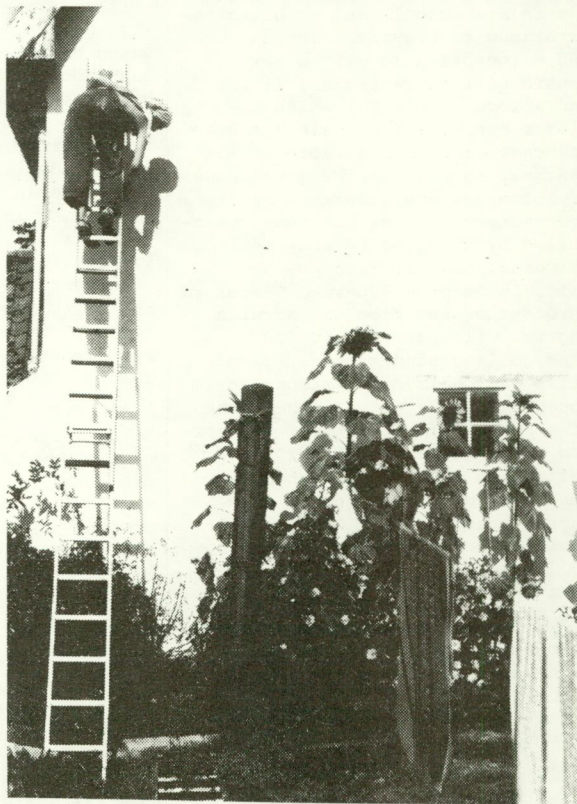
Drop in and see us sometime.

Rintrah

RETREATS

Mandarava

So, my first long retreat of twelve days has finished and I'm trying to recover: that is, to realise that there is another world outside Aslacton too. It has been a really beautiful time. When I arrived the retreat had already been going for over a week, and there were just a few women I knew. Still, it was surprisingly easy to settle down. The first few days I felt like having a solitary retreat, in a positive way anyhow. I had some trouble to get my English back, and I tended not to listen when other people talked to each other. But I was with them with my eyes: I watched them and enjoyed seeing so many happy faces. Another visual experience was the surroundings: the funny looking house with sunflowers, the garden, the greenhouse, and finally the beautiful shrineroom. In addition I learnt to know the wasps quite thoroughly by watching them eat marmalade on my finger. Anyhow, my talkative nature didn't stay quiet for very long and so I started to communicate. And it really was worth it; I've never met so many lovely people at the same time and this feeling stayed right up to the end of the retreat - I'd say it even deepened during the last few days. I think my only trouble was to find an 'enemy' for the fourth stage of the *metta*



stiller life with sunflowers



clearing the breakfast away

bhavana practice. In addition to all these inspiring women I enjoyed the regular life, which isn't possible for me in Finland because of my job. And those work periods: I really felt I got so much positive energy by painting and digging and cooking, and afterwards having a double period of meditation to counterbalance

And finally the ordination and Bhante's visit. It was the first ordination I've been to and I was deeply

touched, especially on the Friday evening during the private ceremony. When Bhante started chanting the Seven-fold Puja with his clear and penetrating voice I felt as if the words were being absorbed into my every cell. The next day's public ceremony, on the last day of the retreat, was quite a contrast to the private one. The atmosphere was very light-hearted. It released the feeling of parting a little bit.

Susanna Laurola



even the sun shone – sometimes

Padmaloka

No less than forty Friends, *mitrās*, and Order members passed through Padmaloka during August, taking part for varying lengths of time in the men's retreat held there during that month. Four weeks is a long time to be on retreat (this was the longest retreat of its kind yet held by the FWBO), and for the fortunate few who were there for its entire length, the retreat soon began to take on a timeless quality. Day follows day inexorably but, apart from the occasional coming and going of meditators, exactly which day it is soon becomes irrelevant. What one is most aware of is just being part of a process, an ongoing process of change, of growth, in which different individuals are participating.

Soon triple meditation before breakfast becomes standard. Periods of silence become more frequent and lengthy, and after a while it is talking that seems awkward. Breakfast in silence is so much more enjoyable than amidst the gossip of everyday life. Then there is working in the garden. And walks through the Norfolk countryside, the deep and mellow greens of

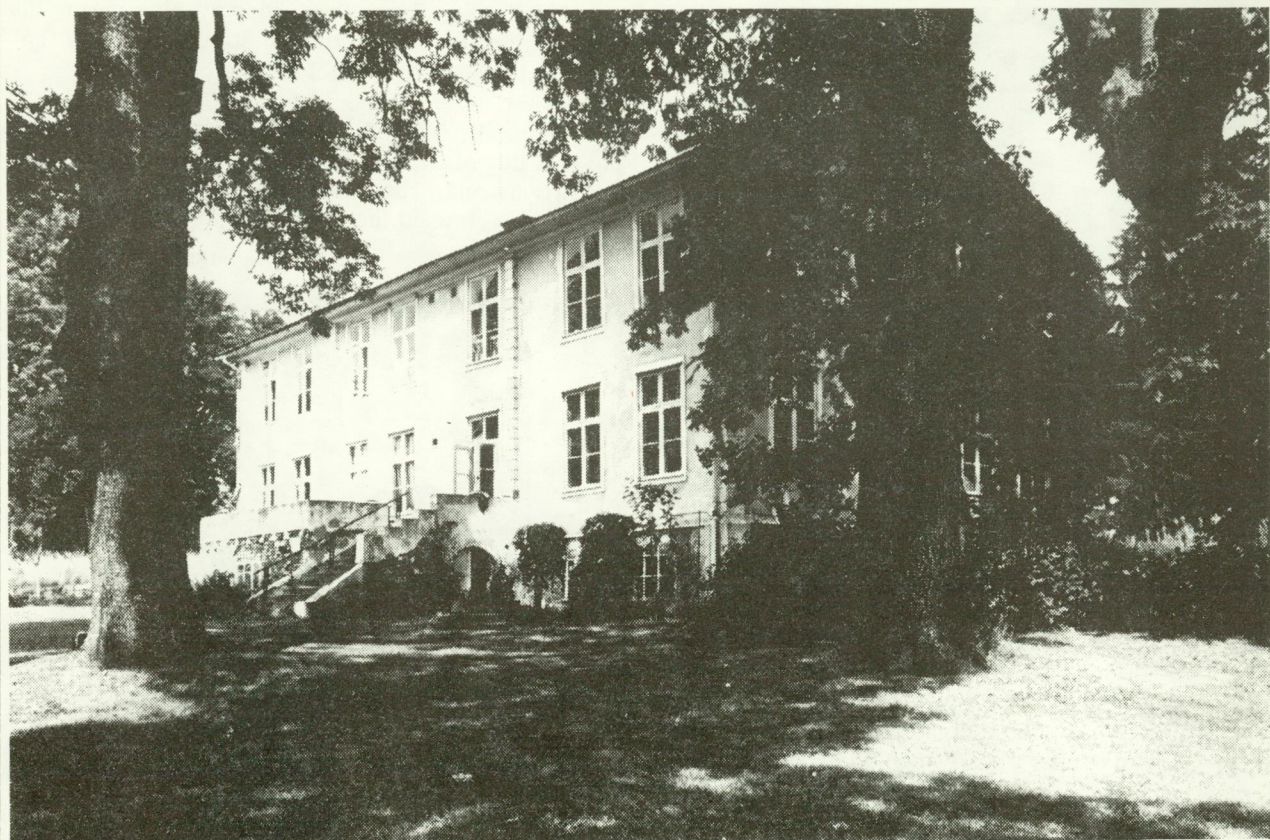
late summer occasionally lit up by shafts of sunlight gleaming through blue cracks in moisture-laden skys.

The fourth week of the retreat seems an intensification of the mood. In fact, this is really a different retreat altogether. The first three weeks have been a general men's retreat, but the final week is the mitra and Ordination retreat. And this is something quite different.

The retreat culminates in the ordination of the former Will Stones, from 'Ratnadvipa' who, on September 1st is reborn into the Western Buddhist Order as Virabhadra, meaning 'Lucky Hero', or 'Auspicious Hero'. An ordination is always a happy occasion, and the warm atmosphere and beaming faces of the final evening of the retreat testify once more to this fact.

The first leaves of autumn fall along Padmaloka's driveway, bearing witness to the fact that all that comes must sometime go. We too must depart, go our different ways. Back once more to classes, communities, wholefood shops, some even to more conventional lifestyles. All refreshed, some inspired, a few may be even transformed.

Ratnavira



Stenfors

Sweden

In the hub of Sweden, halfway between Stockholm and Copenhagen, lies the barren region of Smoland, filled with rock and boulders, covered in pine and fir. Its people are famed for their persistent hard work, which is essential to extract even a bare living from the harsh soil of their homeland. By the end of the last century over half the population had emigrated to the New World, fed up at last with stony poverty and grim persistence, leaving Smoland even more deserted than before.

Nowadays the clear blue water of the many lakes lies undisturbed among the green pines and the deer or caribou are free to come and go as they please. There is a certain stillness in the air, a spacious feeling which comes with the absence of man. In the summer wild flowers and fruit are to be found everywhere and the lakes are full of lilies, white, pink and yellow in the clear water. No wonder Aryavamsa, our only Order member in Sweden, decided to live here, nor is it surprising that this is the site of the new Swedish retreat centre, Stenfors.

The house itself is a spacious two-storey mansion built at the beginning of the 19th century by a

Russian prince. It has a large kitchen in the basement, a shrine room, reception rooms, enough bedrooms to sleep about 30 people, and a big balcony; the whole is tastefully decorated and elegantly furnished in a style that befits its aristocratic origins. There are two or three acres of grounds with barns and a vegetable garden, and the whole property borders on a small lake adorned with thousands of water lilies.

The property of Stenfors belongs to Aryavamsa, who is still working hard to pay for it while he also energetically improves and repairs the house itself. He and his family go there at weekends, but it will also house weekend retreats and the European beginners' retreat every summer. Eventually, looking into the future, Stenfors could be a fulltime Swedish and European retreat centre, a use for which it is very well suited.

This year's European retreat was led by Upasaka Sona and was attended by Friends, Mitras and Order members from Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and England. Although it was led in English for convenience, the sound of many languages at the dinner table gave the retreat a truly cosmopolitan air.

A programme of meditation, puja, communication exercises, and Yoga was followed, with the addition of a series of talks by Sona and Hridaya on the Five Spiritual Faculties. There was also time put aside one afternoon for Friends to ask Bhante questions; this was appreciated by all as Bhante's intellectual clarity cut through any misunderstandings as easily as the sword of Manjushri cuts through spiritual ignorance. Bhante also conducted a mitra ceremony for Marjukka, a Finnish girl. In short it was a happy retreat, and beneficial to beginners and regulars alike.

On the Sunday that the retreat ended a Swedish bhikkhuni, Sister Amita Nisatta, paid us a visit. She had stayed with Bhante in Kalimpong 14 years ago, and was very pleased to see him again after such a long time. She has ordained a few upasakas and upasikas, one of whom, Dhammadipa, was on the retreat, but they do not function as an Order in the way that the WBO does.

On Monday Bhante, Sona and I joined Aryavamsa at his monthly Buddhist meeting in Vaxjo, the small nearby town in which he lives. Here again we met Sister Amita with her disciples Dhammadipa and

Dharmarati, as well as about twenty other people: an especially high turnout because of Bhante's visit. They asked many sincere questions about Buddhism and the FWBO, and listened attentively to Bhante's answers, helped by Aryavamsa's interpretation.

On Tuesday we met a weekly group of twelve who do Yoga, jogging and meditation, as well as discussing their own lives. Again Bhante answered many questions.

Although our stay in Sweden was very brief, we managed to get a general impression of the country and the possibilities for spreading the Dharma there. It seems that the Swedes are rich and well cared for by a comprehensive social system, but still very dissatisfied. They have a high frequency of mental illness, and are obviously no closer to understanding life than when they were poor. In short, like everybody else, they need the Buddha's universal medicine – they need the Dharma, and the understanding which it brings. They would probably be very receptive to the FWBO, but Aryavamsa needs the help of a team of Order members and mitras before our presence is really to be felt in Sweden. I hope he gets that help as soon as possible.

Kulamitra.



They could almost be lotuses!

Cheltenham

We held a Summer Retreat this August, led by Buddhadasa, at New Barnes School near Cheltenham, where a Friend, Andrew Haydock, works. It had been advertised throughout the west of England, and about fifty people from Cornwall, Cheltenham, the Midlands, Wales and London (mainly from London) attended for varying periods of time, with a core of people staying for the whole three weeks. Building up from nothing as it does, a retreat becomes a very rich experience. I found it a source of inspiration to meet people with no previous experience of Buddhism who were in a situation where they were tasting its benefits in a very real way. Beginners coming along to a weekly class often never get the chance to find out what Buddhism really is about, unless they go on a retreat; and longer retreats are much better, go much deeper, than shorter ones.

I took over the job of retreat organiser at the last minute from Ratnavira, as he was needed on the men's retreat at Padmaloka, and I enjoyed the situation immensely. For that core of people booked 'for the duration' (which grew steadily as more people decided to stay on), the first week was a vital formative period during which the tone of relationships, the level of communication, was set. During this first

week the discussions after the evening taped lecture were particularly lively. One especially hot topic was Christianity, which was sparked off by one or two references by Bhante in the 'Noble Eightfold Path' series. In some people, criticism of Christianity aroused some surprisingly strong reactions, which perhaps indicated how deep Christian conditioning, which everyone in our society is affected by to some extent, often goes. Several people found that any criticism of this sort made them feel uncomfortable, even though they did not consider themselves to be Christians, or even know anything much about the teachings of Christianity. Perhaps people feel that they had better not say that they do not believe in God, just in case.

I think that everybody, almost without exception, gained a great deal from the meditation and contact. We are hoping to have another retreat next year. At the moment we are trying to find a place to hold a retreat over the Christmas period, from – approximately – Saturday 23rd December to Monday 1st January. Again it will probably be held somewhere in the West Country, open both to old Friends and complete newcomers of both sexes. So if, reading this, perhaps living far from an FWBO centre, you are interested in what we are doing but cannot attend a weekly class, why not try an alternative to yet another week of TV, relatives, and endless food?

◊amalashila

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RETREAT DATES

Winter retreat in the West Country over the Christmas period. Further details from Retreat Organiser, Ratnavipa, 22 Macroom Rd, W9.

Women's retreat at Mandarava:
22 December - 13 January.

Men's retreat at Padmaloka.
16 December - 6 January.

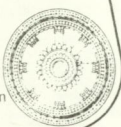
Dharmachakra Tapes

Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures are available on cassette at £1.95 per lecture, P and P 12p, for the first lecture, and 6p for each subsequent one (for airmail prices please send 40p plus postage to –



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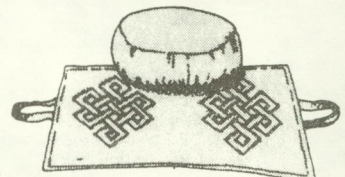
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About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order was founded in 1967 by the Venerable Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, an Englishman who has spent twenty years in India as a Buddhist monk. He returned to England in the early Sixties, and saw the potential for disseminating the Teachings of the Buddha in the West. He felt the need, along with others, for a more spiritually active and authentic type of Buddhist movement in this country and therefore founded the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. A year later, in 1968, he founded the Western Buddhist Order itself, in order to provide a full experience of Spiritual Community, and full opportunities for complete commitment to the Buddhist way of life.

The Western Buddhist Order is a Spiritual Community of voluntarily associated individuals who have come together through their common commitment to the Three Jewels: that is, to the Buddha, or the Ideal of Enlightenment; to the Dharma, the Path of the Higher Evolution of the Individual; and to the Sangha, the community of all those with the same ideal. All members have formally Gone for Refuge to the Three Jewels in public and private ceremonies with the Ven. Sangharakshita, and are thus dedicated to their own development and to working, along with other Order members, in spreading the Dharma in the West.

The Order is neither lay or monastic. The Going for Refuge is the central act in the life of a Buddhist and the lifestyle one leads is secondary. The exact number and form of precepts taken is simply a working out of this commitment in one's life. Order members are of all ages, of both sexes and of different nationalities. All are committed to the Three Jewels and to the following of the ten basic precepts which cover all aspects of natural morality. That is, morality which naturally springs from a skilful state of mind, rather than morality of a merely conventional kind.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is the legal body and organisational matrix, through which Order Members work. Order Members wish to create conditions whereby others can come into direct contact with the teachings of the Buddha in a practical, dynamic and living way. In our public centres and Branches we hold classes and courses in meditation and basic Buddhist teachings, yoga classes, lectures, seminars, courses in communication and retreats. We publish a quarterly newsletter and celebrate all the major Buddhist festivals. We are aware how difficult it is to develop spiritually in uncooperative surroundings and are therefore creating situations where people can live, work and practise together. We run two wholefood restaurants and a wholefood business, have our own printing press, publications department and design studio and many other businesses. Each centre and community aims to be as self sufficient as possible and new businesses and ventures are springing into life continually. In the main each centre and community is autonomous and has its own flavour through the ideal underlying all is the same. Thus we try to provide both unity and diversity and many different situations so that all those who come into contact with us can find a channel into which they can direct their energy.

The Friends is not an organisation, society or club and has no formal membership. Anyone who comes along, or who is in contact in any way, is a Friend.

FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER CENTRES AND BRANCHES

The Office of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order:

Sukhavati, 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2. Tel: 01-981 1225

The Office of the Western Buddhist Order:

Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Nr Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 050 88 310

CENTRES AND BRANCHES

U.K.

<i>London Buddhist Centre</i> 51 Roman Road Bethnal Green London E2 Tel: 01-981 1225	<i>Aryatara</i> 3 Plough Lane Purley, Surrey Tel: 01-660 2542	<i>Heruka</i> 13 Kelvinside Terrace South Glasgow G.20 Tel: 041-946 2035	<i>Vajradhatu</i> 41a All Saints Green Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 0603 27034	<i>Vajrasana</i> 12 Bruntsfield Gardens Edinburgh Scotland Tel: 031-229 7940
<i>Amitayus</i> 15 Park Crescent Place Brighton, Sussex Tel: 0273 698 420	<i>Grdhrakuta</i> 9 Aylcliffe Grove Longsight Manchester Tel: 061-225 3372	<i>Mandala</i> 86d Telephone Place Fulham London SW6 Tel: 01-960 3515		

OVERSEAS

<i>FWBO Helsinki</i> Albertinkatu 21c12 00120 Helsinki 12 Finland Tel: Helsinki 669 820	<i>FWBO Auckland</i> P.O.Box 68-453 Newton Auckland Auckland New Zealand Tel: 769 308	<i>FWBO Christchurch</i> P.O.Box 22-657 Christchurch New Zealand Tel: 795 728	<i>FWBO Wellington</i> P.O.Box 12311 Wellington North New Zealand Tel: 725 493
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COMMUNITIES (Visitors by arrangement only)

<i>Amaravati</i> 30 Cambridge Park Wanstead London E11 2PR Tel: 01-989 5083	<i>Beulah</i> 95 Bishops Way Bethnal Green London E2	<i>Grdhrakuta</i> 9 Aylcliffe Grove Longsight Manchester Tel: 061-225 3372	<i>Padmaloka</i> Lesingham House Surlingham Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 050 88 310	<i>Vajrakula</i> 41b All Saints Green Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 0603 27034
<i>Amitayus</i> 15 Park Crescent Place Brighton, Sussex Tel: 0273 698 420	<i>Golgonooza</i> 119 Roman Road London E2 0HU Tel: 01-980 2507	<i>Heruka</i> 13 Kelvinside Terrace South Glasgow G.20 Tel: 041-946 2035	<i>Ratnadvipa</i> 22 Macroom Road West Kilburn London W9 Tel: 01-960 3515	<i>Vajrasana</i> 12 Bruntsfield Gardens Edinburgh Tel: 031-229 7940
18 George Street Brighton, Sussex Tel: 0273 693 971	Greengates Oxshott Road Leatherhead Surrey	<i>Mandarava</i> Street Farm Aslacton Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 037-977 344	<i>Sukhavati</i> 51 Roman Road Bethnal Green London E2 Tel: 01-981 1225	<i>Ratnaloka</i> 91 Carlton Road Christchurch 1 New Zealand
<i>Aryatara</i> 3 Plough Lane Purley, Surrey Tel: 01-660 2542	<i>Kalpadruma</i> 3 St Michael's Road Croydon, Surrey Tel: 01-688 2899			238 Tinakori Road Wellington 1 New Zealand

REPRESENTATIVES

<i>Upasika Jinamata</i> Gleditschstr. 44 1000 Berlin 30 Germany	<i>Upasaka Aryavamsa</i> Elleholmesvagen 11 5-35243 Vaxjo Sweden	<i>Upasika Vajrayogini</i> Ringdijk 90 Postgiro 16 2586 Rotterdam Netherlands	<i>Upasaka Lokamitra</i> c/o Mr Maheshkar 2050 Sk. Jan Mohammed Street Camp Pune 411001 India
<i>Upasaka Kamalashila</i> c/o Sandy Ewing 28 Three Sisters Lane Prestbury Cheltenham, Glos. Tel: 0242 38653	<i>Upasaka Manjuvajra</i> c/o 2 Valley View Trescowe, Germoe, Penzance Cornwall		