

Newsletter



July 2009

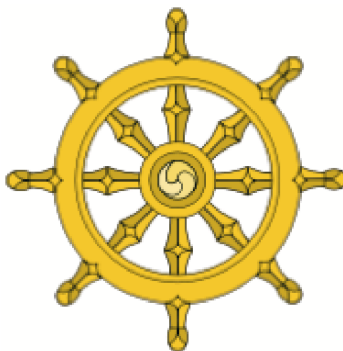
Manchester
Buddhist Centre

Dharma Day Festival

On **Tuesday 7th July**, this month's full moon, we will celebrate the Buddhist festival of Dharma Day at the Buddhist Centre. On the full-moon day of July, precisely two months after his Enlightenment at Bodhgaya, the Buddha delivered his first discourse to the group of five ascetics who had been His disciples previously. This is often called the First Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma. Without this compassionate act of the Buddha there would be today no Dharma, no Enlightenment, no path to freedom. Down the centuries there have been other great individuals who continued the work of the Buddha, so the Dharma has been able to spread to millions and millions of human beings right up to the present day.

Following on from his talk at Wesak, Buddha Day, exploring the Buddha's Enlightenment, Sona will continue to

follow the story of the Buddha in a talk for Dharma Day. He will also look at three other great individuals whose effect on the Buddhist world can be seen as part of a great revolution - the Dharma Revolution! He will also look at how we too can



participate in the great work of spreading light in the darkness of this world of ours.

Daytime and Evening Programme

2 - 5 pm:	Afternoon of Practice in Lotus Hall
5.30 - 6.45 pm:	Shared vegetarian meal - please bring food to share - all welcome
7.00 pm:	Talk by Sona - <i>Turning the Wheel of the Dharma</i>
8.30-ish:	Festive Sevenfold Puja

Before the evening's activities, for those that can make it, there will be an afternoon of practice in the Lotus Hall. This will be followed downstairs in the tea area by our usual festival-day shared vegetarian meal of food that we all bring for the occasion. The evening will close with a special Sevenfold Puja ritual. All

are welcome to come to Dharma Day but please be aware that, apart from the meal, you will need to have been to a Buddhism introductory course to make the most of it. Just turn up, no booking required.

Global Sangha Sundays

This summer Amitasuri and Arthavadin invite you (and *especially* those of you who struggle to get in during the week) to join us at the MBC for a month of Global Sangha Sundays. Every Sunday from **26th July** through to **16th August** we will be connecting with each other, as well as Buddhists around the globe, to joyfully engage in shared Dharma practice and sangha building.

The programme will be roughly the same each week. The morning will begin at 10am with a mantra followed by a reflection on current world events. During the course of an extended second mantra, when offerings can be made, we'll generate and send metta to those who need it most. Then, as the mantra fades, we'll move into a 40 minute period of meditation, concluding at about 11.20am with the lovely Dhammapalan Gatha - the Last Vandana. (Don't worry if you don't know the words. We'll bring copies along so you can join in or you can, of course, just listen.)

Afterwards we'll gather in the tea area downstairs for a brunch of OJ, fresh coffee and croissants. Mmmmm. What a way to

end/start the week! So, do yourself, the sangha and the world a great favour. This summer check out Global Sangha Sundays at the MBC. We're looking forward to it and hope to see you there. And remember, getting into town and parking cars near to the MBC should be a breeze on Sunday mornings when town is less busy and on-road parking in the Northern Quarter is mostly free. **Amitasuri and Arthavadin**

MIND THE GAP

How should we mind the gap?
With underground mind,
stay still mind or step down mind?
Gaps might become endangered species
if not minded
perhaps we should invest in Gap?
I like gaps, they fill nothing with
everything

Aryamati

Sangha Night Classes in July The Great Bodhisattvas

Following Nagapriya's excellent series of talks on Mahayana Buddhism in June, we're going to try to invoke some of the great Bodhisattvas in July.

On the **6th July** Ratnaguna is going to introduce *Avalokiteshvara* - the Bodhisattva of compassion, whose mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* is found painted and carved all over Tibet. I read somewhere recently that this mantra could be the most often repeated sequence of syllables in the history of mankind!

On the **13th July** Dharmottara is coming over from Liverpool to share her love of *Manjusri*, the Crown Prince of Wisdom. Dharmottara has a beautiful mind, and I'm sure her talk will be a real treat, so don't miss that one.

As yet we don't have a Bodhisattva or speaker for the **20th July**. We have been trying to get someone to introduce us to *Vajrapani* - *Holder of the Thunderbolt* - the wrathful Bodhisattva or energy, but so far we haven't succeeded. Be assured though that on the night, someone will be introducing us to one of the Bodhisattvas, although maybe not *Vajrapani*.

And finally, on **27th July**, Sanghaketu will be introducing us to the beautiful and fascinating *Tara*, the quintessence of compassion. This again will be a treat, as Sanghaketu has been devoted to *Tara* for many years.

An aspect of ordination into the Western Buddhist Order is the receiving of a *Sadhana* - a visualisation meditation practice. They choose one of the great archetypal Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from the Mahayana tradition to meditate on and are 'given' the practice in the ordination ceremony. Order members practice their sadhana regularly over a number of years, thus getting to know intimately their chosen Buddha or Bodhisattva. Each of the speakers in this series will be speaking about the Bodhisattva they meditate on, so you can be sure they will be speaking from familiarity and love. **Ratnaguna**

Next Newsletter:

The deadline for next month's edition of the newsletter is **20th July**. Please email items to: mbcnewsletter@gmail.com
As a guideline: 150 to 400 words good, 500 - 800 words large and over 1000 a blockbuster. To get newsletter by email contact: info@manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk

The Sangha Retreat at Vajraloka

Thankfully, I had been to Vajraloka before, because finding it requires quite a lot of mindfulness! A tip to anyone going for the first time – it's a lot further along the road than you think. And yes it is a road, even though it's mostly covered in grass. And you will fear that you're going to be swallowed up by the trees. But trust me, it's worth it. "How quietly, how surely/ You approach the happy country,/ The heart of stillness." Well, my diesel engine was disturbing the quiet, and as I say, there was an element of uncertainty, but to be sure it did prove to be a happy country in the heart of stillness.

Vajraloka is an amazingly beautiful, peaceful gem in a valley in North Wales. It is run by a FWBO community of men who are as welcoming and friendly as can be. They're also wonderful cooks! We all looked eagerly forward to every meal time, with a different delicious soup each lunchtime, fresh bread and mouth-watering, wide-ranging dinners. It not actually being a holiday resort, though, I suppose I should move on to the real reason we were all there.

The week was the Sangha retreat for the Centre. Having not been to the Centre for a while I was slightly apprehensive that everyone else would be best friends and I'd feel a bit like an intruder, but of course everyone was incredibly warm and open, and I instantly recalled the reason I was there: "Whoever follows those who follow the way/ Discovers his family, and is filled with joy." The family atmosphere that Sangha creates is so special, and so inclusive. A number of us commented that the experience has made us more open to the idea of communal living, and I don't think that it was just the idea of having delicious meals cooked for us!

The theme of the week was the Three Wisdoms: Listening, Reflecting and Meditating. Ratnaguna inspired us with daily readings from the Dhammapada (and if you haven't yet guessed, the quotations in this piece are from said text) to which we applied the Three Wisdoms. The Wisdoms can be seen as three different ways through which insight can arise, and I am fully convinced that each one of us on the retreat gained new insight through their application. The fabulous combination of the three wisdoms of Ratnaguna, Kavyasiddhi and Arthavardin provided opportunity to be inspired in so many ways. We engaged with the texts from a wide range of approaches. We reflected in

solitude, in pairs and in groups, through words and through art. We meditated with mindfulness and with metta, and in ways new to many of us, as our teachers led us into still, absorbed states where the truth of the Dhammapada could truly infiltrate more deeply into our beings than many of us had ever before experienced. Change is most certainly possible! I felt dread pierce my being at the suggestion that I create something artistic to reflect my experience of applying the Three Wisdoms to a text. I regarded myself as a person who dealt solely in words and cognitive reasoning, but Kavyasiddhi and Arthavardin's creative activities, and the daily pujas, enabled me to "see" with my whole being, challenged my restrictive self-identification, and experience the truth of the Buddha's teaching that we need to feel the truth, and not just intellectually receive it.

"Better than a hundred years of ignorance/ Is one day spent in reflection", but better a week than just one day, surely! It was mine, and many others', first retreat of a week, and I cannot exaggerate the immense possibilities that such an opportunity presents. Even the more experienced retreatants remarked that they achieved great depth in their practice, and I would recommend the experience to anyone who was considering it. I emerged from the retreat in a state of calm, joy and mindfulness that I have never before experienced. In fact, I tried to wander off into fantasy land on the drive home but found my mind resisting it; it seemed to want to stay focused in the moment (which is surely what we would want of every driver on our roads!). My reaction of aversion and attachment to various aspects of the week have taught me much about myself, and I was genuinely surprised to observe that accepting them and watching them led to their passing.

We all, of course, have to take our practice into our daily lives, but taking the time out of our daily lives enables us to discover just what we are capable of. The results can be surprising and invigorating. Many readers will have first hand experience of this, of course. Some will have many years of such, but for those who have none, or little, or have not had it for some time, I urge you to try it, to leave home, "seeking/ Happiness on the hard road", remembering that at 15mph, 2 miles along such a road takes longer than you think!

Beccy Simpson

MBC at Pride 2009

As it says on the homepage of the MBC website, "Buddhism addresses itself to all people irrespective of their gender, race, *sexuality* or nationality." There are plenty of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in our sangha and a few transgender people in the wider Order.

Yet, given long and bitter experience at the hands of organised religion, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have little reason to guess they'll be welcome at a Buddhist centre.

So, I thought, let's make the welcome explicit. This year for the first time, a small team of

lesbian and gay MBC Buddhists will hold an event at the annual LGBT Pride festival down in the Village, on August Bank Holiday Sunday. Somewhat unusually, it's an outdoor event, featuring a meditation taster class, a workshop on the Five Precepts and plenty of discussion. It's a pleasure to note that the Pride organisers are totally delighted we contacted them with this idea.

To help people feel welcomed to our own building, we'll follow this event with another at the MBC itself the following week. Find details of both events on the MBC and Pride websites any day now.

Munisha

BROUGHTON DIARY

Sona and I donned our jackets and strolled up to the women's community on Sunday. There we enjoyed 'lashings of lemonade' (or was it elderflower?), cucumber sandwiches, cake and convivial company. The garden party was great fun and though I didn't buy any of the women's clothes on offer I did plump for an Alexander McCall Smith book I wanted to browse again. Shakyajata revealed a side of herself normally concealed, that of a songstress with Russian affiliations. I must mention the circle dancing led so well by Taravandana. How do the French do it? The steps to the left and one to the right had my Clarks shoes in a turmoil but other dances delighted, especially the one where your arms are giving out blessings. I was relieved not to win the flowers in the raffle and generally was struck by the efforts that had gone into preparing such a good event.

When I heard Aryamati, our landlady, was having the house measured with a view to future alterations I started to think of life post Blue Cliff Community. Well it would be nice to live above Hebden Bridge in a small community that could host weekend events. Commuting to work at the Buddhist Centre would be interesting. Another extreme thought was to live above the Centre and so save on travel time altogether (and be closer to the Sangha of course). For the present though we're here in Broughton and happy to enjoy the house and garden.

On one local ramble I came across the Bella Vista gateposts. In the 1800's a rather grand house stood on the far side of Bury New Road from us. The owner, a successful businessman with an impossible Greek-sounding name, was excused payment of rates for a spell after a fire that left only two rooms habitable. Whilst he had one room his servants were squeezed into the other. A girls school stood on the same site for many years and though the driveway entrance is bricked up the gateposts still stand reminding anyone interested that Broughton like everywhere else has a past.

Sanghaketu

Going Beyond Fear and Dread in the Life of the Buddha

A reminder that there will be a men's weekend, **Sat 25 & Sun 26 July**, at the Manchester Buddhist Centre, in which we will look at how the Buddha dealt with fear and dread, as well as gaining an understanding of the wonderful benefits that arise from a concentrated mind. For source material we will use *Bhaya-bherava Sutta* 'Fear & Dread' from the Majjhima Nikaya.

The programme includes several sessions of meditation, short talks by Sona, discussion in both small and larger groups, and some devotional practice.

The cost will be: £80/£60/£40
(Waged/Low-waged/ Concessions)

Experience the Sensation of India!

On **Saturday 11th July**, there will be an evening with an Indian flavour at the Centre, with a showing of the hit film 'Slumdog Millionaire'. Food with an Indian flavour will be provided, starting at 6pm, then the film in the main Lotus Hall, starting at 7pm.

This will be followed by a discussion, in which the star performer will be our very own Ratnasagara, an Indian Order Member now living in Manchester. He started life as a 'slum kid' and pulled himself out of that by his own efforts (NB he is not a millionaire, just a modest and generous family man with a wicked sense of humour)

This will be a fundraising event, the proceeds to go to a charity described on www.justgiving.com/nagalokafutures. This is dedicated to giving training to young people from very poor backgrounds, where they can become self-reliant and also help to lift their families and their 'low-caste' communities out of dire poverty.

So, do come and bring your friends and family - but please note that the film may not be suitable for young children. You will be doing something that will really make a difference in India, for people living in desperate circumstances. Suggested donation for the evening is £6 but do give whatever you can. **Shakyajata**

Own a Piece of the Buddhist Centre's History!

On **13th July**, the Manchester Buddhist Centre will have been 'officially' open, in the Turner Street building, for thirteen years. How many hundreds (thousands?) of people must have meditated in the Lotus Hall over that time? How many lives have been changed by the Dharma? If you're one of them, you may have recently noticed a mellower sound marking the stages of meditation or puja.

The big old brass bowl has served us well, but its unpredictable volume and sometimes jarring clang is not ideal. Thanks to a Sangha member's generosity, we now have a lovely new one from the Centre shop.

The old one is consequently looking for a new home... Since this bowl has so much history we've decided to offer it for auction via email, and also by paper bids at the Centre's reception. You can see the bowl there, too. The proceeds from the auction will go to the Jyotivana Women's Community Meditation Hut fund. Here is an opportunity to practise generosity!

How to bid

A bid consists of the amount of your bid; your name and contact details. You can send an email bid, Subject: 'Bowl Auction', to kate@manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk OR place a paper bid in the bowl itself on reception and marked for Kate's attention. Closing deadline: End of the day on **13th July**. Kate will inform the lucky winner on 14th July. Highest bid so far is £80

evening for women mitras

Last year, quite soon after I became mitra convenor, we had an evening for women mitras. It was well attended and a really good evening. I fully intended to do another one but for one reason or another it has not happened -until now that is!

So I am taking advantage of the break in beginners classes over the Summer and on **Tuesday July 28th** we will have an evening for the women's mitra sangha. For those who can make it we will have a shared meal - from 5.30 -7pm. As usual bring some food to share.

At 7pm we will have some collective practice and after that we'll have time for introducing ourselves, asking questions, and discussion. We have 67 women mitras according to my records and many of you don't know each other so this evening can also be an opportunity to get to know others a bit more.

I will be there with Suryaka and, quite likely, a few more dhamrucharinins. No need to book - just come along on the night.

Padmarashini

BOOKSHOP NEWS

Yes, we've been building up our range of CDs and DVDs and there was a bumper delivery recently, great for gifts. But the big news is that the bookshop is to host a 'Bookclub and Writing Circle' starting in September. It will meet monthly on an evening yet to be determined and will hopefully lead to rewarding activity for our local Sangha. More info to follow of course but you can register your interest (enthusiasm even) with me at sanghaketu@gmail.com.

Also I have started to browse Sangharakshita's 'From Genesis to the Diamond Sutra'. Oh, but as it's on sale I might as well buy it. **Sanghaketu**

The AV Library

Perhaps you've noticed that the old cassettes and videos have been removed and sent forth. The CDs of lectures however remain. They are to be re-housed in a new swish home (actually some shelves we're buying) and will hopefully gain a new lease of life with a new generation of borrowers. Ask at Reception if you're interested in using any of the CDs. **Sanghaketu**

Ordination training days for women

Dates for your diary for women who have requested ordination. Sunday September 13th and Sunday December 13th 2009

Themes still to be decided but dates definite! **Padmarashini**

Going Deeper over the Summer

Although the next introductory meditation class does not start until September the Going Deeper class will continue on Wednesdays from **22nd July to 26th August** inclusive.

This will run as a drop-in meditation practice class and is open to anyone who has learnt the two meditation practices that we teach. There should also be opportunity to discuss aspects of meditation practice.

UNFINISHED

After the flux and reflux of sea
makes our reptile selves
take a dose of lightness

Perhaps we're more than halfway up ...
to the light?

Aryamati

BUDDHAFIELD NORTH

BIG SUMMER CAMPING RETREAT: 24 – 29 AUGUST 2009

Buddhafield North have been running retreats in the Yorkshire for five years now. All Buddhafield retreats provide an opportunity to take your practice of the dharma out into the natural world. The BIG SUMMER CAMPING RETREAT is a precious opportunity to live for a week in a spiritual community in beautiful, secluded conditions. Everybody is welcome on this retreat regardless of age and meditation experience. The retreats are held at a beautiful farm on Addingham Moor, near Ilkley.

This year's retreat will focus on the Four Means of Unification of the Sangha, The Sangrahavastus. These are:

- Generosity
- Kindly speech
- Beneficial Activity
- Exemplification

There will be a short talk each evening on each of these headings and a chance to

discuss them in small study groups.

There will meditation, puja, ritual, bodywork and a chance to learn about bushcraft. Vegetarian food is provided so all you need to bring is your own camping and shrine room equipment. There will be a programme of activities for children at various times during the day.

Tejapushpa, Dayavajra and Dayaka will lead the retreat. The cost is £160 (fully waged), £130 (low waged), £100 (unwaged). Children are charged at 50% of the adult rate and under fives go free. For more information, visit the Buddhafield North website: www.buddhafieldnorth.org.uk and booking forms should also be available at your local centre.

You are most welcome to join the BFN team in setting up and/or, taking down. Please let us know if you are available when you book. **Dayaka**

Breathworks

Breathworks has recently agreed to deliver a series of Living Well with Pain and Illness courses for people in Wigan and Leigh, co-funded by the NHS, Local Authority, and European economic partnership. The courses will be for people unable to work due to chronic pain, and aim to help them restore quality of life and make steps towards more active living and working. This is a huge breakthrough for Breathworks; as well as meaning that a substantial number of people will access the Breathworks programme over 2009-2010, it may lead on to wider opportunities for people incapacitated by physical pain being referred to the Breathworks approach in the future. Courses begin in the autumn.

There has been a change in the structure of the Breathworks organisation; Sona has taken on the role of CEO. This frees Vidyamala from watching over the development of the business, as she has for many years, so she can function more as a consultant, particularly in relation to materials and research. Sona meanwhile will be bringing his dynamic energy and vision to leading the development of the business.

There are still a few places for men available on our retreat for graduates of the Living Well with Pain and Illness programme, over **12-17 July**. This event is always very much

appreciated by course graduates, so do consider coming for a refresher and recharge in the beautiful countryside setting at Taraloka.

Our next courses will start in September: the next Living Well with Stress course begins on **Sun 6th Sep**, the next Living Well with Pain and Illness course begins **Wed 9th Sep**.

Bodywise

We're doing it a bit differently with our yoga classes this summer – four week courses, instead of the usual seven or eight. This means you can book for a course without worrying that you're going to miss a couple of sessions while you're soaking up the sun (fingers crossed) on your holidays. Classes begin **week commencing 29th June** for four weeks and then again on **week commencing 27th July**.

Inner Yoga Trust continue their teacher training programme on **Sat 4** and **Sun 5 July** and on **Saturday 18** Christine is leading a yoga morning workshop (**10am – 1pm**) entitled "Sequential Flow – Clarifying our relationship to the ground within the sun salute sequence." Suitable for those with at least 3 months yoga experience.

Have you picked up your new Bodywise programme from the front desk or from the Bodywise reception yet? Find out what's

going on here July to December 2009..Alternatively, go to the home page of our website and sign up for our monthly email newsletter.

Olivia Live

Over **27th & 28th July** Olivia is performing new work with her band Unfurl as part of the Manchester Jazz Festival. It is in collaboration with a visual artist and based on themes of nature, ritual and connecting with the inner child.

If you have heard her you will know that Olivia is a really talented violinist and creative musician. She played at the centre a while ago during the puja where we were celebrating mitra ceremonies. So if you want to go and support her and enjoy hearing her new work it is on at the contact theatre, Oxford Road, 7.30pm both nights. To book www.contact-theatre.org or tel. 0161 274 0600

Film Night at Earth

A reminder of a fundraising film night in Earth Cafe on **Wednesday 22nd July**. Kick off just after **7pm**. Two short films, one from Vanessa Cuthbert the other from Vidyamala. Main feature is "The Spirit of Tibet - The Life and World of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Primary Teacher of the Dalai Lama". Tickets available on the evening at £5 waged / £3 unwaged.

July

Wed	01	Breathworks: <i>Living Well with Stress</i> course begins at MBC	11am - 5pm
Sat-Sun	04-05	Bodywise: Inner Yoga Trust Teacher Training with Pauline	10am - 4pm both days
Mon	06	Sangha Night: The Great Bodhisattvas - Avalokiteshvara	7 - 9.30pm
Tue	07	DHARMA DAY FESTIVAL	2 - 10pm see article for programme
Fri-Sun	10-12	Weekend Meditation Retreat: <i>Making Friends with Who We Are</i> led by Arthakeut and Balajit at Vajraloka	
Sat-Sun	11-12	Women's Weekend: <i>Three Myths of Spiritual Development</i> with Saddhanandi	8:30am - 3:30pm both days
Sat	11	Indian Evening: A fundraiser featuring food, film and fun	6 - 9.30pm
Sun	12	Buddhism & Meditation Day - Taking It Further	10:30am - 4:30pm
Sun-Fri	12-17	Breathworks: <i>Graduates Retreat</i> , Taraloka Retreat Centre, Shropshire	
Mon	13	Sangha Night: The Great Bodhisattvas - Manjusri	7 - 9.30pm
Sat	18	Bodywise: Yoga – The ground and sun salutation sequence with Christine	10am - 1pm
Mon	20	Sangha Night: The Great Bodhisattvas - talk 3	7 - 9.30pm
Wed	22	Buddhist Film Night at Earth Cafe - films with cake, drinks and raffle	7 - 9:30pm
Sat	25	Mula Yoga Day for Order Members: the Offering of the Mandala led by Dayanandi	10am - 5pm
Sat-Sun	25-26	Buddhism & Meditation Weekend - Going Beyond Fear and Dread led by Sona	10am - 5pm both days
Sun	26	Global Sangha Sunday - alternative Sunday mornings with Amitasuri and Arthavadin	10am - 12pm
Mon	27	Sangha Night: The Great Bodhisattvas - Tara	7 - 9.30pm
Tue	28	Evening for Women Mitras led by Padmadarshini - starting with shared meal	5.30 - 9.00pm

August

Sat-Sun	01-02	Bodywise: Inner Yoga Trust Teacher Training led by Pauline	10am - 4pm both days
Sun	02	Global Sangha Sundays	10am - 12pm
Mon	03	Sangha Night: tba	7 - 9:30pm
Thu	06	Full Moon Puja to Ratnasambhava	5.45 - 6.45pm
Sat	08	Bodywise: Yoga – Back bends – Support from the internal organs led by Christine	10am - 1pm
Sun	09	Global Sangha Sundays	10am - 12pm
Mon	10	Sangha Night: tba	7 - 9:30pm
Sun	16	Global Sangha Sundays	10am - 12pm
Mon	17	Sangha Night: tba	7 - 9:30pm
Mon-Sat	24-29	Buddhafield North Big Summer Camping Retreat - see article	
Mon	24	Sangha Night: tba	7 - 9:30pm
Sun	30	MBC Buddhists at the Manchester Pride Festival - see article	
Mon	31	Bank Holiday - centre closed	

Please note the views and opinions expressed in the Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those held by the trustees of Manchester Buddhist Centre or by the FWBO/WBO in general.

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MBC Links:

www.manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk
www.earthcafe.co.uk
www.bodywisegenaturalhealth.co.uk
www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk
www.clear-vision.org
www.manchestermittas.blogspot.com
www.sanghasocial.com for monthly walks

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order Links:

www.goingonretreat.com
www.fwbo.org
www.fwbo-news.org
www.fwbo-buddhist-articles.org
www.freebuddhistaudio.com
www.videosangha.net
www.flickr.com/photos/fwbo/sets
www.Sangharakshita.org
www.people.fwbo.org