

Dhanakosa News

Towards a New Vision of Dhanakosa



As you know this May we have been closed. During this time there have been a number of projects underway at Dhanakosa. These projects are a mixture of modernisation and essential maintenance.

Apart from the work

done to the roof we have laid a new carpet in the lounge, put in a wooden floor in the shrine room, decorated the lounge and bedrooms and put in 2 new shower units. Perhaps less noticeable is the upgrading of our sewage treatment system. No more of those smells when the wind is in the wrong direction! If you have not been this year we also laid a new patio in the winter. It is more than double the size of the old patio and, although it is not finished yet, it is already a great space to be in on those sunny days. So overall we have done a lot this year already to improve our facilities.

As I see it we are in a period of modernisation. We managed to buy Dhanakosa just a few years ago and now we are working hard to transform what is essentially an old hotel into a Buddhist Retreat Centre. That is the vision – watch this space.....

John Frater

What Do YOU Think?

Once a year the team at Dhanakosa meet with the trustees to talk about future developments. However an important part of Dhanakosa is not at these meetings. That part is yourselves, the people who come here on retreat. So this year we would like to canvas your opinion on some of the sorts of things we have been discussing. So if you have the time and inclination we would appreciate your feedback through filling in the enclosed questionnaire.

Shrine Room Renovation Appeal

Also enclosed with this newsletter is a fundraising letter outlining our plans for the shrine room, what it will cost and how you can help.

John goes to Spain

John Frater is now on the Ordination retreat in Guhyaloka. He will not return! John has embarked on a mythical journey, during which he will go through spiritual death and re-birth and come back to us a new man with a new name.

We wish him well on his journey.

Sadhu John!

(see interview on page 2)



Amoghavira becomes Private Preceptor

We would like to congratulate Amoghavira on becoming a Private Preceptor. This means that he is 'qualified' to ordain men into the Western Buddhist Order. To get to this point he had to go through what was effectively a spiritual M.O.T. Obviously if you know Amoghavira you will not be surprised to hear that he sailed through with no difficulty at all. He will be going out to Spain in June to ordain John.



Amoghavira is going to undertake a sponsored run from Loch Earn to the top of Ben Vorlich (3224 feet high) in October. All you have to do is guess the time it will take him. The nearest to the correct time will win a free place on a weeks retreat at Dhanakosa (provided spaces are available). It takes around 2 hours to walk the route so hopefully he'll do it in less! Fill in the form in the enclosed fundraising letter if you wish to sponsor him.

Ben Vorlich is the white peak in the photo above, there shouldn't be any snow on the mountain when he does the run hopefully.

Placing His Heart On the Dharma

An interview with John Frater, manager of Dhanakosa, who recently headed of to Spain to take part in a four month Ordination retreat.

Q: When did you ask for ordination John?

A: It was November 1998

Q: What made you ask?

A: I had just finished a fundraising appeal with the Karuna Trust and I felt inspired. I remember chanting the refuges & precepts (devotional verse) with the team on the appeal and particularly thought the positive precepts were a fantastic ideal. I wanted to move towards a wholehearted approach to the dharma and it seemed a good idea to want to join a community of people who are committed to practicing.

Q: What was it that appealed to you about the FWBO's approach?

A: Its simple emphasis on an individual's deepening of Going for Refuge and at the same time its emphasis on Sangha.

Q: What do you mean by Going for Refuge?

A: I can't remember the proper definition, but I think of it as 'placing ones heart on the Dharma', to the extent that the Dharma imbues ones life .

Q: Do you think you are happier now than 7 years ago?

A: No, I don't think I am happier but I've changed a lot. I'm more confident, more mature and have a greater appreciation of Dharma practice. Six and a half years ago I was a bit naive & idealistic with regards to the spiritual life. Its been a gradual progression for me and I've come full circle in that I focused on ethics at the start and now I feel ethics is at the heart of my practice again.

Q: But with these positive changes you have described, doesn't that bring some sense of happiness?

A: I think happiness is a bit of an odd one really. Certainly my life is richer, fuller, more colourful, more content. Colour is a good analogy, Dharma practice makes life less black and white and more colourful. But I'm also aware of the dark side as well, I still have bad days, low periods etc, craving and aversion still assails me.

Q: How do you feel about being given a buddhist name?

A: A bit nervous. On one level it symbolizes the Order's recognition of my effective Going for Refuge which is great. On another level I'm thinking - Oh no, what if it sounds awful! I'd like a digestible name, one which doesn't alienate people outside the FWBO.

Q: What do these funny sounding names mean?

A: They are often a recognition of personal qualities and/or qualities that one needs to develop.

Q: Where is the Ordination retreat held?

A: In a dry, mountainous valley in Spain, just inland from Benidorm.

Q: Will you be allowed contact with anyone outside of the retreat during that 4 months?

A: No but I'll be able to receive any mail at the end of it...letters of congratulations, hopefully!

Q: It sounds like your life will be stripped down to a simpler level for a while?

A: Yes it should be bliss! Though I'm sure the mind will



respond with desires for more complexity. I'll just have to sit with that!

Q: And how do you feel about leaving all your responsibilities here at Dhanakosa, like the garden and the managerial stuff?

A: I'm in two minds about it really. There are a lot of things happening at Dhanakosa during the summer months so I'm going to miss out on that. I'll just have to drop all Dhanakosa business and stay focused on the retreat. I'm sure I'll have times when I'll be pondering about the work that's going on though and also how the garden's getting on.

Q: Looking around the grounds at Dhanakosa it's obvious that you have put a tremendous amount of effort into the gardens & uplifting the overall look of the place over the last five years. What other plans do you have?

A: I'd like to just finish the new patio when I get back and plant it up. I'd like to simplify things more and concentrate on the planting schemes. The arboretum is beginning to take shape, only one tree in the ground but several more on the way when I get back.

Q: What will you miss most when you are away?

A: Difficult...hopefully I won't miss much because I'll be having such a good time. I'll miss Helen my girlfriend, my brothers, friends and all the seasons flowers (particularly the Tulips) in the cutting garden.

Q: Do you see yourself being at Dhanakosa for many years to come?

A: No...not many years...some perhaps, but I'll move on at some point. However Dhanakosa is in my blood now so I don't think I'll move too far away and I'll always be involved at some level.



Families Go Forth

We were in the midst of moving house, changing jobs, schools etc. when we joined the families retreat in March of this year. It maybe seemed that we didn't 'have time' to take a week'out' from our everyday lives, but as ever it was what we needed most.

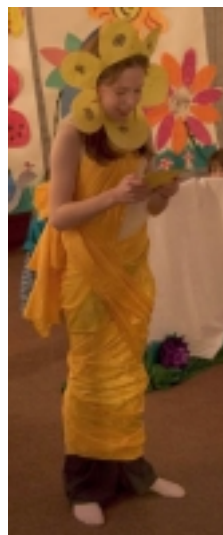
Amoghavira led the retreat as he does each year at Easter, sharing his inexhaustible wisdom, compassion and humour with adult and child alike. He also led discussion group each day – this year it was the eightfold path (sometimes). Vairocana helped care for the children who all love him for his open-ness. Vajrahridaya excelled in the kitchen with his quiet mindfulness. As the week progressed the ever changing hills, sky and water worked their magic and opened me up to myself and to my family. I became aware of the changes in the children and the adults who retreated with us each year to Dhanakosa – especially the children who grow so quickly.

The beauty of the families retreat for me is that I am retreating with the most important part of my world– giving me a chance to deepen my love, understanding and awareness of it. When the retreat is over the family returns with a shared experience of Dhanakosa and its beauty.

Morin Fenton



Golden moments from the Families Retreat March 25th – 1st April



When I went to a Dhanakosa Easter retreat I had a really good time. All the children did a play about spring and we dressed up as flowers. I also liked going because you didn't have to really care about how you dressed or if you wore make-up. I had a really nice time at Dhanakosa.

Elloise Fenton aged 12

On the early days of Fatherhood

Chronic tiredness, loss of memory, losing all track of time. What can be wrong? Time? When was the last time I had any? I cannot remember..... What was all that kaffuffle back in September? In and out of hospital, and at the same time as moving house. It all seems a blur. How can I be so tired and get no sleep? Then there is the strange noises. Day and night. Babbling, gurgling, grunting noises. And the big dark eyes.... Big dark eyes? Ah that's it... I'm a Dad! Rosie was born on 3rd September, not without a struggle. She has been making her presence known ever since. Well she started making it known quite a bit before then but not quite as vocally as she does now. She is of course fab (your own always are I believe), and is continuing to develop a wide variety of cunning ways of getting what she wants.



Since leaving Dhanakosa a year ago quite a bit has changed. Now, rather than trying to un-

ravel the challenges of the Buddhist life in a retreat community, I'm doing it as a Dad. For me becoming a Dad has been one of those experiences which is totally life changing and completely natural at the same time. I have always felt strongly that the practice of Buddhism is about being alive. In the deepest and most meaningful sense. Well, the new conditions certainly generate new demands. But this is also just part of the human condition. The fundamental challenge of the spiritual life is remarkably similar both as a Dad and at Dhanakosa. The challenge of every moment of consciousness. To continue to greet our experience with an openness and compassion that allows the simple truths of our being to unfold.

I still work for Dhanakosa as part of the management of the place, and also spread my skills and experience around other FWBO charities in Scotland – to the extent that time allows. Ah yes, that's it... to the extent that time allows. Now someone else is staking a claim to my time. Nayaka.





Arboretum Up date

In response to the last newsletter I received 3 donations for trees in the Arboretum. I have sourced the trees I want to get, namely *Metasequoia*, *Pinus Wallichiana* and *Ginko Biloba*. These will be joining the *Sophora Japonica* in the later part of the summer when I get back from Ordination. Over the winter I hired a machine to transplant some of the self-sown native trees that were in the field. I have placed these around the edge in order that there is a good solid boundary of native trees within which the collection of non-native trees is contained. I think this will help in creating a sense of place and link the arboretum into the surrounding landscape. I am delighted that this project is starting to catch on. Before long we will have a fine collection of specimen trees from India, Tibet, China and Japan – the countries of the great Buddhist teachers of the past. To sponsor a tree in the Arboretum costs between £200 and £500. Or, if you'd like to donate money to our other tree-planting project, we are planting small trees in large numbers every year and for these we ask £7 per tree. John Frater

Garden Up date

This summer, while John is away on his ordination retreat, the garden will be lovingly looked after by two long-standing friends of Dhanakosa: Christine Ironside and Sue McDougal.

Swing yer kilt and cultivate yer metta!

This year Dhanakosa is hosting a brand new event in the shape of Ceilidh Dancing & Meditation! This must be a first in the Buddhist world? Vimalavajra, expert Ceilidh dancer now living in Germany is coming over to lead the week in September. Should be a hot ticket!

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Retreat Calendar

June

03-10 Awareness and Freedom Here & Now (the Sudden Approach to Pure Awareness, suitable for regular meditators)

10-17 Wolf at the Door 1 (writing retreat suitable for FWBO regulars)

17-24 Wolf at the Door 2 (for those who have done a Wolf at the Door 1 retreat)

Sept

02-09 Ceilidh Dancing and Meditation (introductory)

09-16 Gay Men's Retreat (introductory)

23-30 Autumn Open (introductory)

Dhanakosa runs on the basis of generosity. You are free to give more or less than our suggested donations according to what you can afford.
suggested donations:
waged £280 low waged £210 unwaged £140