

Turning Thirty: Celebrating Three Decades of the Shin Buddhist Fellowship UK. Reflecting on the annual event of the Lantern Festival

Written as a companion piece to expand a little on the [ABOUT US 3 -2018-2026](#) webpage as published @ www.shinbuddhistfellowship.uk

Thirty Years of Weekly Gatherings

In February 2026, the Shin Buddhist Fellowship UK reached a significant milestone, marking thirty years of regular weekly meetings. The very first gathering took place in the evening during the Lantern Festival of 1996. At first, we were known simply as the Southampton Shin Sangha, and we took on the name of the Shin Buddhist Fellowship UK in 2012. Lantern Festival is celebrated fifteen days after Chinese New Year, and it coincides with the first full moon of the lunar calendar. To clarify, Chinese New Year begins with the first new moon, setting the rhythm for the subsequent festival that follows with the full moon.

The Lunar Calendar and Lantern Festival

The date of the lunar new moon always falls somewhere between 21 January and 20 February, which means the Lantern Festival takes place between 4 February and 6 March. In 1996, the first new moon was on 1 February, and fourteen days later, the full moon heralded the Lantern Festival. This special night is particularly notable for drawing attention to Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Compassion, who occupies a central role in the festival and is widely venerated for her compassionate nature.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

Chinese New Year brings with it a host of myths, customs, and traditions. Historically, it is a time for honouring deities and ancestors. Families across China celebrate with unique regional traditions, but one universal practice is the annual reunion dinner on New Year's Eve. Thorough house cleaning is also customary, symbolising the sweeping away of past misfortune and wishing for good luck in the coming year.

Lantern Festival Celebrations at SBFUK

The Shin Buddhist Fellowship UK continues to mark the Lantern Festival through a range of commemorative activities. Some years feature modest gatherings with only a handful of attendees, while other occasions more elaborate events have taken place. Many of these celebrations are documented on the Pure Land Notes Weblog, with titles referencing either 'Lantern Festival' or 'Kuan Yin'.

Some are less obvious and tucked away in the 'My Music' section of the PLN Weblog. One of the more eclectic entries is '[Namandabu Didgeridoo](#)'—a live recording made on Chinese New Year, 10 February 2020, consisting of an uninterrupted hour of NAMANDABU chanting accompanied by a didgeridoo and seven singing bowls. I leave it to you to decide whether listening to it is a mesmerising or monotonous experience!

Finally, one of my favourite hidden gems is a live recording made at a Lantern Festival event held in 1999. This is a suite of six instrumental guitar pieces, collected under the title '[SameAsThisSameAsThat \(The Interconnectedness of Things\)](#)'. The bracketed subtitle fittingly encapsulates the spirit of the festival.