



### lazy Sunday afternoon... after a very hard morning!

On Sunday 27th June, at an hour when most people are still pleasantly in the land of nod or perusing the Sunday papers, four stalwarts from Cambridge set off for a school hall in Loughton. Billed euphemistically as 'Sunday Tai Chi', it was not quite clear whether this was an extended class, an intensive or just for fun.

Shortly after arrival however, it became apparent that it was, indeed, an intensive. As everyone prepared themselves for some serious hard work, there were more than a few puzzled glances and sinking hearts as wall bars were fully extended and rigged up. What purpose could wall bars possibly have in Tai Chi? It did not take long to find out!

After the foundation exercises and a number of dan yus it was off to the wall bars. At first, having such support felt a bit like cheating, although in a way it did make the dan yus easier, at least that is until work began on half dan yus which, ironically enough, were much harder to achieve.

Any initial cynicism was quickly dispelled since using the wall bars meant that it was possible to sink further and achieve depths not normally possible. Having the bars as support also meant greater control over leg and body movements, thereby making corrections and adjustments easier to accomplish. It also gave a very good idea of what a full dan yu should

feel like. For those who had not yet developed sufficient leg strength to sink very low in a free-standing position, these exercises were particularly beneficial.

The pair work which followed was also constructive for different reasons. Each pair worked on dan yus, learning from each other, with one partner performing while the other watched and gave feedback in a supportive and positive manner. It was also a very good way of making people less introspective and served as a poignant reminder that there is much to be gained from being perceptive and watching others.

Detailed work on the tor yu followed, before integrating the move into the first part of the set and *Parting Wild Horse's Mane*. To illustrate the 'sitting' positions in the latter move further, it was back to the wall bars for some one-legged dan yus. 'Connecting' with the post or bar was one thing, one-legged dan yus quite another! That having been said, on returning to more work on *Parting Wild Horse's Mane* the difference was quite pronounced. Likewise, the final set into which the morning's work was implemented also felt very different.

One of the many good things about the morning was the instructor's openness and receptiveness to questions. This was particularly noticeable during the coffee break which resulted in a very informative discussion

Thanks to everyone who has contributed articles and photos to this second issue and particularly Kathryn who has put in a lot of effort. We hope you will find the personal experiences interesting.

**Please bear in mind when reading this newsletter that the opinions expressed are those of the contributors and are not necessarily Taoist Tai Chi Society policy.**

If you have something to say about Tai Chi, or anything related to it, then please set pen to paper, or finger to keyboard, and send it in – not forgetting an illustrative photograph!

Contact Sam on 01223 504746 (email: sam.masters@dial.pipex.com) if you have something to contribute.

and detailed explanation of the many health benefits of Tai Chi and the ways in which it works on the body.

Finally, when everyone was encouraged to hold onto their respective banisters the next morning, it had nothing to do with any kind of relationship between dan yus, tor yus and the stairs. It was safety first and foremost for the semi-awake in case the jelly-legs kicked in with a vengeance... thanks for the warning Cliff, and good intensive! ■ Kathryn Beckett



### Isleham Gala

► Another enjoyable demo at Isleham Gala, 3rd July. Thank you to all who took part – Cambridge, Warboys, Stamford, Bury, Sudbury, Soham and Isleham.

### Cambridge BBQ

► Pre-nosh *Wave Hands* at the Fitzwilliam College Sports Ground in Cambridge. Thanks to Norman for organising another enjoyable event attended by members from Cambridge, Warboys and Stamford



### Charity donations

- The Milton class raised £65 for the Kosovo Crisis Appeal through a raffle and tea money donation.
- The Milton class raised £19 to sponsor a child in memory of Master Moy. The money was raised as part of the mid-Essex parachute jump.
- Isleham and Soham collected £62 for Kosovo through a raffle and donations.
- Tennis Centre, Cambridge class raised £40 for the Turkish Earthquake Appeal.
- The Isleham intensive raised £91 for the Jean Usher Building and £33 in the raffle for the McMillan Nurses.



The Taoist Tai Chi Society of Great Britain is a registered charity dedicated to making the health benefits of practicing Taoist Tai Chi available to all who wish to experience them. Registered Charity No: 1053425

## meeting Mr Moy



Meeting Mr Moy proved to be one of the primary aspects of learning about the Society for members in Canada. I was reminded recently at an intensive that new members of the Society no longer have the opportunity to meet Mr Moy in the flesh. In many ways this does not really matter, but I recall from my own experience that meeting him for the first time helped to dispel many of my doubts about this person I had heard so much about.

When I joined the Society, the issue for me, hearing everyone rave about this Taoist monk, was, "nobody is that good, are they?", and also, I was deeply sceptical that he was simply another eastern guru making a living out of those without the moral fibre to search for their own salvation. The question put to me at the intensive reminded me of how I had felt back then. How can it be right that so many people seem to virtually deify Mr Moy?

I don't know how to answer that, but I know that meeting Mr Moy for the first time was for me the moment when I was able to put the hype behind me, when I saw that he himself was not impressed by the fuss people made.

It was at the Grand Opening of the Taoist Tai Chi Centre in Colchester. I had just recently completed the set, and went to the ceremony to find out a bit more about the Society and the people in it. There was some speculation that Mr Moy would be there, and I wanted to find out for myself what this bloke was really like.

There were hundreds of people at the event. I looked around, expecting someone of his celebrity to be easily identifiable. Not so; the more I looked, the less I saw anyone who might have resembled him. About two hours into the celebrations I gave up looking round for him and joined the queues for tea and refreshments. After the tea break there was complete pandemonium as people raced here, there and everywhere to clear away tables, chairs and cutlery.

I was bumbling bemusedly around in this busy throng with a mug of tea in my hand when I suddenly spotted a small man sitting quietly by the wall, completely ignoring the noise and activity. He saw me staring open-mouthed at him, gave me a little smile, and then went back to the stillness I had first seen him in. I knew straight away who it was, not because I recognised him from his photographs, not because he was wearing fancy clothes, and not because he was holding court to all the local dignitaries, but because he was the only person there who seemed not to be bothered by all the commotion. It was then I decided that, hype notwithstanding, he really was an OK guy.

Meeting Mr Moy now he has cast off his mortal shell is, shall we say, more difficult. Yet wherever the 108 moves are done with a good heart, thoughts of him will not be far away. Whatever your views on the afterlife, Mr Moy continues to live in the hearts of those whose lives he has touched and continues to reach through the Taoist arts he has taught us. ■ *Bob Bowles*

## top women role models

Some fifty men and women congregated at the Tai Chi Centre in Colchester for the Women and Tai Chi workshop held on 6-8 August. A fund-raising event in aid of the Polish Centre, the workshop was run by two international instructors. The Canadian instructor, Judy Millen, had learned Tai Chi with Master Moy since 1979 and was one of the few to have been with him when he passed away. Carmen Capilla, a European instructor from Spain, had learned Tai Chi since 1988 and had also spent much time learning with Master Moy. As a result, the activities of the weekend were interspersed with many interesting reflections and reminiscences.

The practical sessions incorporated new developments into moves such as *Single Whip*, *Paqua*, *Repulse Monkey*, *Fair Lady Works Shuttle* and *Move Hands Like Clouds*. Although some of the changes were easier to make than others, the detailed instruction, and explanations of what we were trying to achieve and why, meant that there was plenty to take home and work on. Likewise, there was instruction in some of the Lok Hup moves and a chance to watch the complete set. Newcomers to Lok Hup were encouraged to participate in the practice of individual moves and to join in and copy the first sequence of the set. A very enjoyable taster!

Dan yus and tor yus gave way to lots of double *Push Hands* throughout the weekend. For those who were new to this form of Tai Chi, it was a rather fun way of doing considerably more tor yus than otherwise imaginable. Since it was all about skill, rather than force, problems of posture, balance, squaring and empty arms were easily detected and adjustments made, especially with the help of a supportive partner. Indeed, as everyone had to change partners several times, there was no room for complacency – only lots of improved tor yus!

Informally watching the instructors and Andrew Kirby in action, was impressive to say the least. Most memorable were Carmen's *Butterfly Dan Yus* and 'bouncing' *Snakes*, not to mention Andrew's *Forward and Backward Rolls*. Later in the workshop, everyone was given the option of trying *Butterfly Dan Yus* but with the proviso that they should only be practiced in the presence of an instructor experienced in

the move. Most had a go, many initially using the wall-bars to get a feeling for the move and to build up confidence. Afterwards, there was a great sense of achievement and satisfaction, especially since it was actually much easier and less painful than it looked!

A few early birds caught Nick performing the Sabre Set which, although shorter than the Sword Set, was amazing to watch and it was interesting to hear about the moves and associated health benefits. There was also a chance to have a go at a couple of moves and to learn a little of how to control the sabre, not just physically but also by focusing the mind.

► Carmen's *Butterfly Dan Yus* enthral participants



Talks covered Canada and the struggle to retain charitable status, the Healing Centre and Temple. Meditation was touched upon and there was brief mention of the health benefits of chanting. If the uninitiated conjured up images of people sitting around going "om", the stereotype was quickly dispelled when Judy launched into a Taoist chant. Very much akin to Gregorian chant, it was certainly very powerful and sent shivers down the spine!

Other talks covered health issues specific to women. There was discussion of osteoporosis and the way in which Tai Chi helps to rebuild bone density. Menstruation, pregnancy and menopause were also covered in a frank and informative manner, with plenty of opportunity throughout the discussions (and workshop as a whole) to pose questions or ask for advice.

The atmosphere over the weekend was extremely stimulating and supportive with everyone learning and working together. Being surrounded by so many experienced instructors and people doing really good Tai Chi was valuable enough, but to have two such top flight female instructors as role models for the future was definitely inspirational. The weekend raised over £3000 for the Polish Centre and lots of 'lucky money' for a Spanish good cause. A truly worthwhile weekend for all concerned! ■

*Kathryn Beckett*



► The tea room/office (left) and kitchen at the Centre in Colchester during the *Women and Tai Chi* workshop. Volunteer chefs fill a vital role in the organisation of all workshops – many thanks to those who prepare the delicious and much needed meals.



Thanks to Peter Turner for the *Women and Tai Chi* photographs

# Stamford pays tribute

as Jean spreads wings

In 1996 Jean Booth moved back to her hometown, Stamford, with her husband Dennis after having lived for several years in Canada. Not too long after that she was attending Tai Chi classes in Cambridge while Dennis waited in the car – a very respectable round trip of about 70 miles! Jean practiced Taoist Tai Chi for a number of years in Canada but it was not long after she started attending classes in Cambridge that she met Master Moy at a workshop in Colchester. He accredited Jean and she soon started her first Taoist Tai Chi class at Stamford Art Centre. A few weeks before that Jean organised an Open Day with a number of members from Cambridge, and Tim who came all the way from Ipswich. There were practice sessions with a number of sets and exercises in which the general public could participate. The purpose of this was to attract the public to join the new group, and I can remember Jean being nervous and wondering whether anyone would turn up on the first day. Most new classes are started close to existing classes where there is already experience and support to hand, but in the case of Jean (and a few others elsewhere in the Society), she started in an isolated area where there was no previous experience. You can well appreciate her nervous feeling!

Of course people did turn up, and over time the Art Centre could not accommodate the morning class so a larger hall was found. Jean also started an evening class in Exton which continued to grow. During this time she was encouraging Albert to go for accreditation, which he did and he is now taking one of the morning classes. The membership in this area grew fast, and in fact at that time the Stamford area could well have had the fastest increase of growth in the UK.

An important aspect of being a Tai Chi instructor is to raise the profile of the Society. Jean has done this by giving talks and raising money for local causes. Articles about the Society accompanied by a picture of Jean or her class appeared quite regularly in local newspapers after donations to charities. It does take a lot of effort and dedication to achieve this, and Jean had both.

This October, Jean and Dennis are moving to Spain, where Jean will no doubt start teaching Taoist Tai Chi again. Jean has been more than just a Tai Chi instructor; the way in which she passes on her enthusiasm for Taoist Tai Chi to her members and goes out of her way to organise talks, cannot easily be matched. Jean has left quite a legacy in Stamford for new people and new challenges. She has been an important building block in the Tai Chi history of GB and will be greatly missed in our area – and even more so by her classes in Stamford and Exton.

We wish her all the best, and thanks for doing such a good job. ■ *Tormod Holt and Susanna Wreth*



## a new experience...

*"Beginners class Tai Chi" caught my eye in the paper.*

*Could I, would I, be any good?*

*Monday night came, take a deep breath, walk up the stairs.*

*"Hello and welcome..."*

*Starting their movements, it looked so hard!*

*Could I do that with perfect timing?*

*Halfway through they were so relaxed, they were nervous but glad to be there to show us beginners the right way to move.*

*Now it was our turn, oh dear! I'm scared. Stand straight, relax, feet forward and smile.*

*Here I go, yes! I can do it.*

*The weeks have flown by, my confidence growing, I am enjoying this. I hope you are too.*

*I will see you there eager and waiting to start our next sessions of fifty moves...*

■ *Sue Kelly, St Ives*

## Forthcoming events

- There will probably be an intensive in Cambridge early next year – watch this space!

## the importance of 'High Tea'

**O**n Thursday nights, Mummy goes out to "High Tea." My three-year-old daughter, Isbeal, doesn't know what this means, but she's been sold it on the basis that it makes Mummy into a nicer person. So on Thursday nights, it's Daddy who picks her and her baby brother up from the nursery, cooks dinner and puts them to bed. Meanwhile, Mummy has supper at a friend's house and goes to her weekly Tai Chi class. When she comes home, relaxed and happy, she can pop into the children's bedroom and give them a kiss while they sleep.

As a working mother with two full-time children, Tai Chi for me is a life saver. With so many demands on me, physically, intellectually and emotionally, the weekly class is the one time when I can put back some of the energy dispensed during the week. The main benefits to me are:

### ● Focus

Life with small children is usually a life lived in a blur, with several tasks to do at the same time: cooking the dinner, while cuddling the baby, while negotiating which video Isbeal will watch. Tai Chi not only focusses the mind on one task and one task alone, but focusses it on your own use of your own body. At the end of the evening I feel centered and calm, with a much stronger sense of my own identity and boundaries.

### ● Flexibility

As children get older they still expect to be picked up and cuddled from time to time – but

as they get heavier this can turn into a weight-lifting exercise! The physical demands of childcare, after a day spent immobilised at an office desk, can lead to classic Mother's Back Syndrome. By encouraging a much wider range of gentle movement, Tai Chi has helped me regain much of the flexibility that I need for everyday tasks.

### ● Friendliness

It's not compulsory to talk to people before class or during the break, but most people do enjoy this. By the time you have finished mastering the basic moves of the set, you are bound to have had at least one conversation over tea, even if it's only to bemoan the fact that you always get lost on the third Brush Knee after the second Punch Tiger. As most parents of young children will agree, almost any conversation that is not about potty training or the finer points of Disney videos, seems intoxicatingly sophisticated!

Attempts to take my Tai Chi home are not quite successful. Isbeal does sometimes ask me to demonstrate my High Tea, but she finds it puzzling. It is not exercise (as far as she is concerned), not fast enough to be fun, and there's no music to dance to. I can see that Isbeal secretly thinks that I am rather lacking in something if I need to make such a fuss about

learning to do something apparently so easy. Of course, it is also rather difficult to demonstrate it with the baby firmly clamped to one leg and the sofa in the way.

But I do draw inspiration from my children while I struggle over my Tai Chi. While I wobble my way through a kick or a pivot, I can think about my baby, now mastering the finer points of walking. Despite all his setbacks he manages to preserve an incredible balance and poise while he masters movements which are just as unfamiliar to him. Meanwhile Isbeal, immersed in learning to catch a ball or painting a picture, reminds me of the total absorption that a three-year-old can bring to the task-in-hand. All I need to do, at thirty-five,

is to forget about the bank statement and the Ribena stain on the living-room carpet, and become absorbed in Tai Chi for a couple of hours. ■

*Nuala Tannahill*



# Tormod waves hands goodbye... for a while!

*Taoist Tai Chi in the Cambridge area owes its existence to Tormod Holt who is taking a break from instructing to pursue other avenues. So, how did it all start?*

The Taoist Tai Chi Society expands geographically whenever an instructor moves into a new area and Cambridge was indeed fortunate when Tormod and Susanna moved here. Formerly an instructor in Edinburgh, Tormod soon started up beginner classes; a daytime class in Cambridge and an evening class in Milton. Susanna became his assistant before becoming an instructor herself. Val and Darren joined Tormod's Milton class and assisted him. Both became instructors, setting up classes in the Soham and Huntingdon areas respectively. Meanwhile, Jean moved to Stamford, having learned Taoist Tai Chi in Canada. She also joined Tormod's class, became an instructor and set up in Stamford. Since then, two more people from Tormod's classes have become instructors and others are on the way.



Moving into a new area brings with it significant administrative responsibility. It is therefore to Tormod's credit that we now have an administrative structure within the area that operates smoothly. Tormod put an enormous amount of thought, dedication and hard work into defining the administrative structure, identifying jobs that needed doing, writing job descriptions for each post and acting as area co-ordinator until everything was up and running efficiently. He also encouraged and promoted this newsletter, contributing more to its first issue than anyone else.

An area with some 7 instructors, and around 10 classes operating within a sound administrative structure is quite a legacy and one which will continue thanks to Tormod's inspiration and indefatigable enthusiasm. Without the incredible amount of work that he has consistently put in over the years, Taoist Tai Chi in the Cambridge area would not exist as we know it today.

Tormod will be sorely missed, not only for his hard work and dedication, but also for the quality and depth of his instruction and the support which he so freely gave both collectively and individually to everyone who crossed his path. He frequently travelled to cover other classes or to attend events and open-days across the area in addition to keeping up his own Tai Chi. All in all, a remarkable achievement!

Thank you, Tormod, for everything you have passed on to us. We all wish you well and look forward to welcoming you back in the future.

■ Kathryn Beckett • Susanna Wreth

## the real Lanzarote

After Tormod and I had booked a holiday on Lanzarote last May, we were pleased to find that the Taoist Tai Chi Society has a club there. It is run by just one instructor, Joan Albert, who takes classes twice a week, one for beginners and one for people who have been practising Tai Chi for a while. We attended a very lively class in what seemed to be the centre of a holiday resort – a place we had not expected to find local people at all.

The hall the club uses is so small that they only practise parts of the set and the exercises inside and then go outside to do the whole set (well, of course it hardly ever rains there). Also, once a week some of the members meet up and do a set on the beach before work. As our Spanish is non-existent, we could not understand what they were saying, which was a shame, because they said a lot. As it was, we just watched and copied.

We couldn't help feeling that we had realised that all three of us had attended February '98. The following evening Joan took us to a restaurant in the mountains, which he said served real Spanish food. It didn't look like much of a restaurant to us, more like the back of someone's house, but the food was very good and the atmosphere very Spanish. Attending a class in a different country was a very interesting experience, and meeting these very friendly locals made us feel as if we had seen a bit of the real Lanzarote – not just the beaches and the volcanoes.



After the class we went and had a drink together, and got to know some of the workshop in Barcelona earlier in the practised before the class, but many of of Tai Chi was practised in lots of other places around the world.

met Joan Albert before, and in the end we the same Tai Chi workshop in Colchester in

■ Susanna Wreth

## Regionalisation

The National Committee is currently under considerable pressure to cope with its workload, and it is clear that the GB Society cannot continue to move forward in its present form for much longer. The National Committee has been considering options to devolve its workload to a more regional level, so that day-to-day matters can be dealt with more speedily and in a manner appropriate to the locality.

Part of this change in direction is taking place in concert with changes already implemented in the way that instructors are accredited. Regional accreditation of beginner instructors has for some time been implemented in Edinburgh Branch, and Essex has now been divided into a number of spheres of influence for local ICC's (Instructor Co-ordinating Committees). The current status of Suffolk Branch in this system is not clear to me.

The process of regionalisation has also been given a boost by the active search for buildings suitable for clubhouses. Edinburgh Branch, with almost 1000 members, has an active building fund, and South-East Essex is not far behind. In Suffolk and the northern part of Essex the impetus for development still derives from the European Centre in Colchester, and the plans for its development as the main centre for instructor training in Europe. Suffolk Branch currently lacks the sense of identity and purpose to enable it to support a clubhouse on its own. However, the Branch's rapid growth means that situation could change very quickly as and when social cohesion starts to crystallise our organisation into structures more recognisable as Branches.

The setting up of true regional committees still awaits a clearer definition of their scope and function, and also a model whereby the current branch structure will evolve. In Essex the model seems to require small Branches to amalgamate to form regions. In Edinburgh the reverse looks more likely, with the present Branch committee gaining some new areas of responsibility and in turn devolving other duties to local sub-committees. The present system in Suffolk Branch means we have a devolved Branch structure, but without the responsibilities of a region. As we grow, it seems likely that we will retain the geographic identity of Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire within a new region. There is also the thought that the formation of regions in Essex will free up seats on the National Committee for areas like Scotland, South-East Essex, and Suffolk Branch, which are currently under-represented.

■ Bob Bowles