

suffolk branch

# workshop news

5 - 6 AUGUST 2000



Impington Sports Centre  
Cambridge

## cultural exchange - what does it mean to you?

*Although the four aims and objectives of the Society are usually included in the introductory speech, they can still sometimes be a bit of a mystery, Susanna Wreth has an idea about one of them...*

For years I took the approach that they didn't actually mean an awful lot. They just seemed to be vague statements that could not possibly alienate anyone, and that everyone would be happy to subscribe to. Just to save you wondering whether you can remember them all, here they are:

- 1 to make Taoist Tai Chi available to anyone who wishes to learn it
- 2 to promote the health benefits of Taoist Tai Chi
- 3 to help others
- 4 cultural exchange

The final one always struck me as being a bit strange, but I thought that it must be something to do with the Chinese origins of Tai Chi, until I heard Mun Fong say that cultural exchange wasn't just "about learning to eat with chopsticks". That must have sowed a seed in my mind, because

several years later it occurred to me what cultural exchange might mean to me...

My background is mathematics and I work, and tend to socialise with, similar people. Through Taoist Tai Chi I have met people who have completely different backgrounds and interests - the kind of people I might previously have met as partners of friends, and who always seemed nice but a bit strange. I imagine that I would have seemed strange to them too, as I am more likely to get excited by the laws of gravity than by a new source of essential oil.

Working with these very different people, getting used to them, and them getting used to me, has overcome the prejudices on either side of the divide, and opened up a whole new world to me. Now one of my best friends is a graphic designer, and to me this is an example of real cultural exchange.

■ Susanna Wreth, Cambridge

Welcome to the first Suffolk Branch workshop. The purpose of this newsletter is to give visitors to the area a brief insight into what some local TTCS members are up to, as well as comments on national issues, an article on the ICC and a report from the Hsing-I workshop earlier this year. (Hopefully we'll get a demonstration over the weekend.)

"Suffolk" branch covers an area way beyond Suffolk itself - from Ipswich up to Stamford (Lincolnshire). As the area is expanding all the time, it is as difficult for members within the branch to meet each other as it is to meet those from further afield. Hopefully this workshop will give us the chance to get to know each other a bit better.

Organising the workshop has been quite a task to those of us new to the job, and as this newsletter is ready to go to press, we are crossing our fingers, and everything else we've got, in the hope that we haven't forgotten anything and that it will all be alright on the night. With more than 200 people attending from all over the country and some from Europe, we hope it will be an event to remember.

**Enjoy!**

**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.**



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

# genesis of a t-shirt

“...just a few words on how you came up with the t-shirt design, if you could please?”

“Yeah, sure. No problem.”

Easier said than done. Where *did* I get the idea from? Well, the final product is actually an amalgamation of two separate designs. The front was based on Chinese depictions of storks or cranes – birds on which Hsien (Taoist immortals) ascended to heaven.

My original idea was to have *White Stork Spreads Wings* over other animals drawn from the set – tiger, snake, golden cockerel and so on, but I was having trouble with the composition. While searching for inspiration I came across a picture of a darker coloured crane and realised that I could create a yin-yang symbol from two birds.

The ‘stick set’ was a product of various doodles trying to come up with a single figure that would be easily identifiable as a Taoist Tai Chi practitioner. With seven or eight poses sketched out, it suddenly seemed obvious to do the whole set. This turned out to be far more time consuming than I had first thought – doing each move to decide which was the most recognisable depiction, then being further hampered by my seeming inability to remember the sequence when putting it down on paper (...oops, where’s the tiger sequence? Start again!).

The fact that it was chosen as the back of the t-shirt means it is a handy reference guide for those standing behind you, so buy a t-shirt and help someone else out!

■ Darren Carpenter, St Ives

A big thank you to *everyone* who took the time and effort to submit a design for the t-shirt. It was a very difficult decision to choose between such varied designs, made much harder by the obvious amount of time people had spent in drawing them up. *Thank you!*



## with a little help from..

A workshop like this only happens with the goodwill of members. The organisation of this workshop was divided into areas of responsibility: Bury took care of the bookings; Huntingdon the food; Soham the tea; Stamford organised fundraising; Ipswich the money; and Cambridge the accommodation.

The workshop committee was responsible for publicity and co-ordinating the areas’ efforts. There have been many people involved in each area, offering to help with particular tasks and to accommodate guests. Some members may think their input was small, but the workshop committee can assure everyone that all input has been important and that it is all the small pieces which make up the big picture. This unconditional volunteering is such an important aspect of Taoist Tai Chi.

*So, a BIG thank you to everyone.*

# The ICC

(nothing to do with Cricket)

You may wonder from time to time just how the Society goes about its business. You probably know all about Branch Committees (no doubt you attend all the meetings), and may even have ventured along to a meeting of the National Committee (taking sandwiches and a flask of strong coffee). These bodies represent the democratic structure of the Society in Great Britain and are accountable to the membership for the running of the organisation, as a company and a charity.

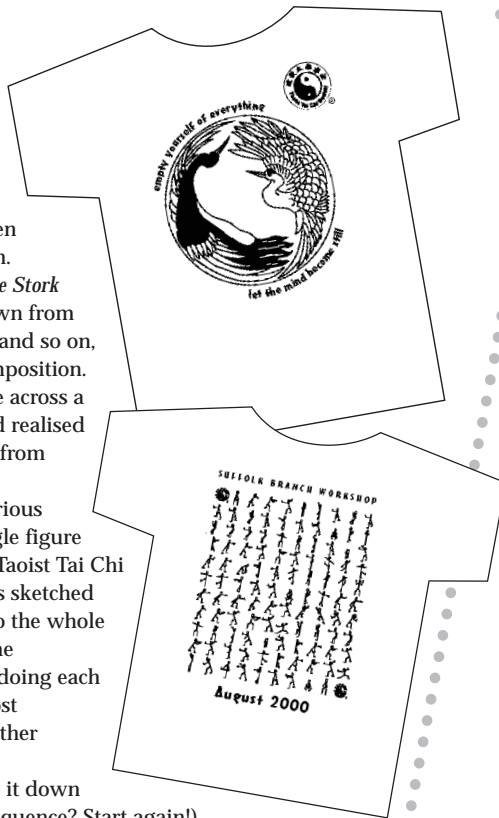
However, there is a part of the Society which is not democratic, that is to do with the Tai Chi itself, as taught by Master Moy. This is the Instruction Co-ordination Committee, or ICC, the members of which – Andrew Kirby and Mike Usher – were appointed by Master Moy personally, to look after all matters relating to the Tai Chi form itself, the content of classes, and the accreditation of instructors. We run workshops for all members, and also instructor workshops which concentrate on the training and accreditation of instructors, and which serve to maintain and improve the standard of instruction across the country.

We were originally responsible to Master Moy himself. Since his passing, the Society has had to restructure itself, and we now report to the International Society, which is the umbrella organisation for all branches of the TTCS world wide. Our responsibilities extend into supporting European branches and instructors, and with the continuing growth of the TTCSGB, we have now brought in other instructors to help us run workshops and accredit new instructors. The latter is now formally dealt with by local committees, known as LICCs (currently one for England and Wales and one for Scotland).

We are keen to ensure that the spirit in which Master Moy taught, and upon which the Society is founded, is maintained and understood, as it underpins, and is an integral part of, the Tai Chi form. It is what makes our Society unique and you will no doubt come across this as we talk and practice. There is no room here to go into this in depth, but all instructors should be able to talk to you about the Taoist principles of compassion, selflessness and service to others. It may seem a bit strange at first, as it may not be clear why we do what we do, but we will always be happy to explain as it is important that members understand about the roots of the Society.

We welcome comments and questions, so please feel free to ask. If you prefer you can contact us some other time. Your instructor can tell you how to get hold of us. We hope you enjoy the workshop.

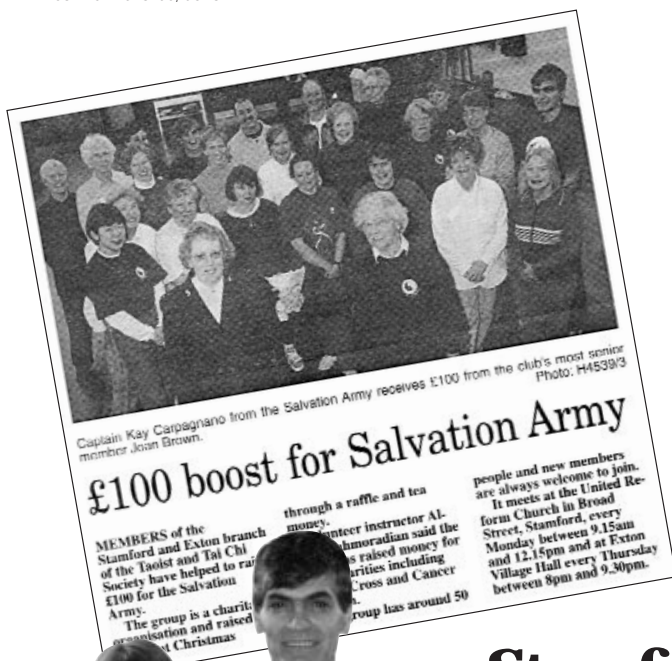
■ Mike Usher, Ipswich



One day in February, I was in an aeroplane on my way to Peru. I chatted briefly to the lady next to me. The flight was long and a little boring and after several hours of sitting still my companion proceeded to do some basic Tai Chi exercises. I immediately joined in and we discovered that although she lives in Milton Keynes she had attended an intensive in Sawston, near Cambridge, the previous weekend. I was also due to go to that but instead I went to look at puppies as my faithful 13-year-old labrador had just died and I wanted to find a puppy to join me on my return from Peru.

My companion, Mary, and I remarked on how strange it would have been had we met in Sawston and then found ourselves sitting next to one another on our way to Peru. 'Tis a small world and on this occasion Taoist Tai Chi brings us together!

■ Deanne Richards, Soham



## Stamford UPDATE

Since Jean Booth spread her wings and took off for Spain, the classes held in Stamford and Exton continue to thrive under the guidance of Albert Shahmoradian.

Attendance levels are regularly between 25 and 30 and the last few months have seen a steady increase in numbers. Albert's enthusiasm is infectious and he is justly proud of having become an instructor in such a short time.

Albert lives in Stamford with his wife and three children and runs a Pizza Parlour in Oakham. What with his family, his work and his Tai Chi he doesn't have much spare time, but he did manage to return home to Iran for Christmas - the first time in 20 years.

Albert is now working towards becoming a regular instructor and is getting plenty of encouragement from his classes, as well as support from John Slater and Jean Gayler who were also newly accredited as instructors this year.

■ Zena Coles, Stamford

Jean Booth and Albert Shahmoradian with the t-shirt presented to Jean by her classes before she left for sunnier climes... get the impression she had a catchphrase?

When I first became a member of the Society I was able to attend a few workshops with Master Moy. I remember being told that we should not view Master Moy's teaching only in terms of Tai Chi movements but also in a wider context such as taking responsibility and respect and awareness of others, and that the Society is a place where we can practice these attributes.

### Now, here is the story...

The day after a workshop Master Moy and his group were flying from Heathrow. Another group was flying from a different terminal and a number of cars had been laid on. The aim was to avoid all the cars having to go to all the terminals. However, there were problems fitting passengers and luggage into their respective vehicles. Frenzied loading and unloading of various items of luggage and rearranging of passengers followed. While all this was going on Master Moy got into one of the cars, sat staring straight ahead, and took no notice of the proceedings. After about ten minutes he got out of the car, pointed to people, luggage and cars and allocated everyone and everything. It was most impressive because within minutes the show was on its way.

Did Master Moy know the optimum way of fitting people and luggage into cars, or did he make the choice arbitrarily? I am inclined to think the latter. The aim of being efficient had resulted in no decision being made, no action taken and people becoming distressed. The result was blockage and disharmony. Master Moy changed all that when he got out of the car.

From this I learned that gaining balance and harmony through Tai Chi moment is only part of the deal, gaining balance and harmony through behaviour in life is just as important. Sometimes the outcome is not as important as the manner in which it has been achieved. Competitive discussions and lively debates can obstruct creativity when people have a preferred outcome. I believe that if more attention is placed on how we work together, the creative process kicks in once trust has been established. A harmonious committee is able to achieve a lot of momentum with little effort.

To achieve harmony, and thereby creativity, in decision making one needs to have awareness and respect of others, the confidence to take responsibility and no doubt a host of other attributes. This is the kind of stuff one can practice within the society.

■ Tormod Holt

Much valued publicity for the Stamford group as they raise £100 for the Salvation Army

## AGE CONCERN support

There has been overwhelming demand for a new class started by newly accredited instructor Jean Gayler from Stamford. The Stamford group were approached by the charity Age Concern with the idea of starting a class in the Westgate Congregational Hall in Peterborough.

The first class was held on 14th June with 28 people attending, and each week new people are coming along. Already the venue is stretched to capacity, but the enjoyment and enthusiasm of the class is good to see.

Jean is being well supported by John Slater and other members of the Stamford classes.

# Peaceful fundraising



Willen Peace Pagoda,  
Milton Keynes



**T**aoist Tai Chi members in Milton Keynes organised a demonstration and sponsored *Wave Hands* as part of a community event in the tranquil surroundings of Willen Peace Pagoda. People were invited to take part in the warm up exercises and first few moves of the set as a 'taster' and to sponsor members to do *Wave Hands*.

The whole event raised an estimated £3000+ for the charity Action For Kids which aims to make children mobile by supplying equipment, such as motorised wheelchairs.

An amazing 110 Tai Chi members attended from many different areas along with 200-300 members of the public who watched or joined in. It is hoped that this may become a annual event.

■ Jeff Moody, Peterborough

## FORTHCOMING DEMOS

**L**ocal members might like to put the 9th September in their diaries. There are two events happening on that Saturday, one on the Recreation Ground in **Fen Ditton** and one on Jesus Green in **Cambridge**.

There is a demo booked for 2pm in the main ring at Fen Ditton, please attend if you can. More details are available from Val on 01638 780039.

There isn't yet a particular time booked for a demo on Jesus Green (posters will go out when there is), but we have been asked to do a demonstration set and a sabre set. There will also be a stall at the event which will need staffing from 12 noon til 5pm. If you can take part or help out in any way please call Sam on 01223 571673.

Both events have plenty of other things going on, so bring your friends and family along too and show them what you can do.

## farewell Darren

**I**t's on a sad note that the Monday night class in St Ives will be saying goodbye to Darren Pryke who is off to pastures new in August.

He has been our instructor for 14 months and we have never known him to miss a class come wind, rain or shine!

May bank holiday of last year was the first meeting – Darren had set up a demonstration with the help of his Warboys class and it was the beginning of Taoist Tai Chi in St Ives.



Looking round the class now, I'm sure he has reason to be proud, stepping back and watching us, he must have a sense that in some way he has helped us all.

We will, of course, see you at the workshops, intensives and demonstrations Darren... best wishes from all the class!

■ Sue Kelly, St Ives

*(You said you didn't want a party, Darren, but you didn't say anything about a write-up – got ya!)*

## does **humour** belong in **tai chi**?

**Y**es it does, in the form of Hsing-I. After instructing at many intensives and workshops in Scotland, Andrew Hung came down to Colchester in May to instruct about 50 people in the subtle art of Hsing-I. Myself and many others had seen a set performed elegantly and amusingly in Prague last year. Seeing how comical it looked, I had to have a go.

As with the Sabre workshops, it was going to be interesting to see how people coped with learning something new, and many experiences were similar, such as confusion, memory blocks and shouts of "can you repeat that please".

With Andrew Hung's quick and minimal style of instructing, combined with the strangeness of Hsing-I, almost everyone started scribbling away on their pieces of paper, trying to remember the set. Only later were we told that "there is no form". We carried on scribbling anyway, making up names for moves like 'fish slap', 'Newcastle' and 'horsie'.

At one point there were 50 people, including many long-term and highly respected members of the society, running around the centre riding their imaginary horses. I shall name no names. If only I had a camcorder.

So after one and a half days working through the set, we then spent the few remaining hours practising until it was ingrained into our minds. And at the end of the workshop, we all did a tai chi set, and found it to be very different.

The Hsing-I set takes about five minutes, has no real set number of steps and although it looks like you're making it up as you go along, it does make you feel good and gets you hot surprisingly quick.

It was well worth going, and the food was great too.

But I still haven't been able to perform a set in public because I'm afraid that the men in white coats will throw in the back of a van and lock me up!

■ Ian Jedlica, Huntingdon