



The Essex Tai Chi Academy Newsletter 12 – October 2019

The Essex Tai Chi Academy runs classes in Tai Chi, Lok Hup Ba Fa, Sabre and Sword at Birchanger, Black Notley, Burnham-on-Crouch, Cold Norton, Felsted, Maldon and Mundon

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter. This year has been a rollercoaster ride for ETCA . As former stalwarts moved on there was uncertainty for the Academy's future followed by major changes to our structure. The very successful International Workshop in Maldon combined with our determination to embrace change has resulted in all round confidence for the future of ETCA.

Thank you to everyone, officers, instructors, trainee instructors, class representatives and all members who have given their support in various ways, enabling the Academy to look to the future positively.

Class Representatives' Forum

The second meeting was held in May, again at Olivers garden centre, Witham. Commencing inside it was soon realised that the sunny garden offered better surroundings for discussions. Judy explained the new Academy structure and introductions were made all round, putting faces to names and linking responsibilities which are as follows:

Overall there was a determination to make the new setup work, accepting that some tweaks may be needed along the way. So far feedback from classes has been supportive.

"I think we have all gained by our instructors attending James's workshops. There is more feedback now, so carry on the good work. I have taken on Black Notley as spokesperson and the class is still well attended with no moans being passed on". Elliott Watkins (Black Notley).

The next meeting is proposed for October, date to be advised.

Focus on Park Drive, Maldon - by Judy Lee-Fenton

In October 2018 we started a beginners' class at Park Drive Club. It was well attended with lots of new members and "Thankfully" several established members of the academy. This class was run differently from the norm, as there was no facility for us to make our own drinks. So we did an hour and a quarter straight through. Afterwards those who wished could have a tea/coffee in the club bar lounge.

It took 9 months to work through the whole set and the class was then closed for the month of August 2019, and reopened on Friday 6th September from 11.15 till 12.45, as a beginners class again. All previous students are welcome to attend, plus, I hope, established members for corners etc.

30 years ago Park Drive started life as a bespoke 6 court squash club. Later an outside swimming pool was added. In Summer 2008 it was covered with doors that slide open in good weather. Saunas, steam rooms, Gym and Dance studios were also added. This year two tennis courts became Padel courts for the new craze from Europe. The club is situated on the side of the Maldon Promenade park and is close to the river. There is plenty of parking and is a nice place to practice Tai Chi.

A member writes:

"Another welcome year started in September with Tai Chi at Park Drive Leisure Centre. A very enjoyable class with very friendly people. And afterwards, a welcome coffee or hot chocolate in a comfy bar served with a smile by Natalie"

Memories of Mr Moy (part2) – Toni Walsh

(During his lifetime, Mr Moy travelled extensively, including visiting the UK to supervise Tai Chi workshops. I was fortunately able to attend some of these.)

Rubbish Tor Yus

I'd always been shy of approaching Mr Moy because so many times I'd seen him getting individuals to do lots (*lots*) of Don Yus or Tor Yus and pouring with sweat whilst he just sat by looking on.

At one workshop, we were doing Tor Yus when Mr Moy called the workshop instructor over to him while we continued with our practice. After a short chat, our instructor returned to us and said with a grin: "Mr Moy has just told me that my Tor Yus are rubbish... but that they are better than all of yours, so to continue with what we're doing!". By the end of that day my arms, legs and back were all aching but my Tor Yus had changed for the better.

After a few years practise I got quite pleased with the way my Tor Yus were developing... until one day at a Mr Moy workshop we were practising brush knee & twist step; as I reached the end of the row, the instructor told me that *my* Tor Yus were rubbish and took me to one side for a major correction to what I was doing. It made my Tor Yu feel wrong, but I remembered that early workshop and Mr Moy's comment. I stuck with it and eventually managed to apply the correction within my Tai Chi.

Many years later, and now a student with ETCA, I attended a workshop in Cambridge being led by one of Mr Moy's students, Doug Overholt. Again my Tor Yus needed changing. This time the changes were quite small but they felt good and I began to feel that with practice I might begin to get somewhere.

Then the instructor at the Maldon workshop this year, James, told me to try doing my Tor Yus differently – Wow! Somehow they just seemed to do themselves; not hard work at all, but oh how I 'glowed' whilst doing them. Now I have an idea of what those sweaty people were probably experiencing years ago: a complete wave of warmth *and well-being*. I realised then how I'd waste the opportunity of being around when Mr Moy was here. Instead it's taken me over 20 years to get there.

So if you are at a workshop and the instructor says your TorYus are 'rubbish', take it as a compliment; it probably means they reckon you are ready to move your Tai Chi on a stage.

Workshop News

Following on from ETCA's first and very successful International Workshop last June, led by James Elser, some of our instructors plus members have attended other workshops throughout the country and we hope you enjoy reading about their experiences.

Suffolk Tai Chi Academy by Viv Crowley.

Woodbridge Community Hall

I was fortunate to be able to attend the Tai Chi Workshop in Woodbridge on Saturday 6th July 2019. Marc Levy was the instructor. He was clearly not only very experienced, but also able to communicate and demonstrate the moves he wanted us to practice. It was in an easy and friendly atmosphere, with plenty of breaks, that we worked on the foot to head aspect of the moves in the Tai Chi Set, and also the internal rise and fall of the body. Marc connected the dots for these aspects of the set and their relevance to Parting Wild Horse's Mane, Repulse Monkey, and Fair Lady Works Shuttles, to name a few. I found this especially helpful and it was a great opportunity for me to spend more time on my Tai Chi.

Eastern Counties Tai Chi Academy by Lisa Kay

Cambridge Regional College

Tai Chi with Doug Overholt, Susan Carson and James Elser.

To set the scene, the venue was on a large college campus; we met in a sports hall with a high ceiling, a climbing wall at one end and various coloured lines marking out courts on the floor. Around 80 people attended each day. The host group had laid on homemade cakes, biscuits and fruit for the breaks.

Throughout the weekend the emphasis was on developing a good structure to our Tor Yus and Don Yus and to then integrate these into every move in the set.

We started by practising a basic Tor Yu.

1. Cross the hands and move the weight back.
2. Open the hands to the front.
3. Push the arms forward and allow the body to follow.

We continued adding layers into those 3 basic principles focusing on: sit-step-turn-stretch.

It was interesting to then use these principles in various moves within the set starting with some moves where it is easier as you have already done a half step, eg. Stork Cools Wings and Play the Pei Ppa.

As always the time quickly disappeared and we found ourselves bidding farewell to old friends and new. The task now is to practice what we learned and to improve.

Shropshire Tai Chi Academy
Rushbury Village Hall, Wall under Heywood

by Shirley Stone



A number of ETCA instructors and members enjoyed this **Lok Hup** workshop from 16-18th August 2019.

I stayed in a lovely B&B in Much Wenlock, a short drive from the hall through the lovely Shropshire countryside.

Since the workshop was announced back in March I had been looking forward to this weekend, and it did not disappoint.

Doug, Sue & James worked with the whole group tirelessly throughout the weekend helping us improve our form, so we can impart our knowledge of Lok Hup to other members.

For me I was missing the final part of the second half which I was keen to complete.

There was a great deal to get through over the weekend working on both halves of the Lok Hup set.

We started on Friday afternoon, continuing all day Saturday and Sunday, stopping only for refreshments.

At the end of Saturday's workshop our hosts had arranged for us to meet at a restaurant for a very nice meal. It was good to relax and chat together after an exhausting but enjoyable day.

Doug, Sue and James reminded us of including circular movements in the set, also compressions, expansions and contractions, keeping the flow of movements in the form. We also worked on keeping the arms horizontal, elbows down and slowing down the set which also helps keep the form within the set.

After an enjoyable weekend I am keen to put into practice all that I have included in this write up.

A night to remember - (or maybe not!)by Richard Herriott

Norma and I also attended the Lok Hup workshop and after the Friday afternoon session had finished a hot meal had been laid on in the hall. This meant we were later than planned arriving at our accommodation - a self-contained cottage adjoining a house in Church Stretton. It wasn't easy to find as light was fading and the heavens decided to open.

Time to tackle the keypad entry system, not one of my strengths at the best of times, to access the required key. I soon discovered that through rain speckled glasses my wet fingers seemed to be larger than the tiny pointed buttons so nothing happened. Press down the reset knob; after a few more tries the reset knob drops off amongst a pile of rain soaked leaves. Without much hope, the adjoining house showing only a glimmer of light, I knocked on the door. The owner appeared in her dressing gown having stepped out of the shower and still in her slippers came to the cottage with a torch commence the search.

Successfully finding and reinstalling the reset knob she immediately gained access on our behalf.

Was this down to her slim fingers as they flashed over the buttons or was it because yours truly had entered the wrong number. Norma's earlier numerical instructions, and my interpretation of such, clearly differed but to ensure a pleasant weekend followed I assured her she must have been correct.

However.....

We had a super LokHup workshop and we still don't know how we kept moving after all the wonderful food that was provided. There was even a Sunday roast lunch which meant that for those travelling a long distance home that evening only a brief comfort stop would be necessary.

A special thank you to Jo and Jenny for organising an excellent workshop; to Brian for arranging the restaurant meal at Uffington; and to all the Shropshire Tai Chi Academy members who contributed to this successful event.

Sword and Sabre Workshop – the experience of a beginner! by Nick Boddington

Maldon Football Club

I have to confess to being an absolute beginner at both Tai Chi Sword and Sabre. I have previously been to one Sabre workshop, worked through the Sword set in detail once, and the rest of my practice has been copying others in my classes at Mundon while trying not to stab anyone with a sword. However, I also have to confess to being absolutely fascinated with both of these sets. So I think I was probably the first to book onto James's workshop when Lisa and Judy sent round the email advertising it.

I, and I know others, were sad and anxious to hear just before the workshop that James was in hospital and wouldn't be attending. Selfishly I knew I would be missing out on a great experience having got so much from his Tai Chi workshop earlier this year. I also knew that there was enough experience amongst the instructors to collectively offer a great weekend and given my lack of experience I knew it would still be incredibly valuable. It turned out I needn't have been disappointed as James, I suspect quite literally, dragged himself out of a hospital bed to lead the weekend, and I think I speak for everyone attending when I say how grateful we were.

James followed a similar style to the Tai Chi workshop. Instead of working through the two sets move by move he instead focused on the foundations and moves that are repeated such as holding the sword and sabre, ensuring the correct position of the blades during cuts, the importance of 'heart line' to guide the movements and the balance between 'gravity' allowing the blade to fall and 'pressure' in raising the blade. The first things I had to correct were gripping the sword too tightly, ensuring 90-degree angles between my arm and both sword and sabre and using my whole body, especially the spine to make cuts. I was introduced to 'coring', the twisting of the sword at the end of cut and the importance of the travel of both ends of the sword and sabre. The repeated cry of 'focus on your butt end' took on a whole new meaning.

Saturday was devoted to Sword and Sunday to Sabre and by 4.30 on Sunday afternoon I can honestly say my brain was overflowing. Whilst I took copious scribbled notes, I

think these types of events leave me with enough to work on for a year, and hope that others will have taken away all the things I have already forgotten.

There is no wasted time with James. When we were not practicing James was demonstrating, or with endless patience correcting, and I discovered at least five muscle groups I didn't know I had by Sunday afternoon. James offered a number of variations within the sets but emphasised the importance of making our Tai Chi including Sword and Sabre 'our own'.

I think my lasting memory will be watching James at lunch time when we were all eating, going slowly through each set on his own ready for the afternoon session. It was one of those moments when I felt I had just taken up the piano - getting my head around playing scales and 'chopsticks' and then watching a concert pianist play. I have got so far to go, but this workshop has moved my practice forward and given me an insight into where I would eventually like to be.

Thank you James for a truly great workshop.

A Big Thank You

Doug Overholt, Susan Carson & James Elser, senior instructors from Canada, have once again given their time, energy and knowledge to the various UK Tai Chi Academies they have visited during this summer.

Whilst Doug and Susan were not able to be at our own International Workshop due to other commitments and travel logistics, James, on his first visit to Essex led a superb workshop with excellent instruction for all abilities. Some new language has entered our Tai Chi learning: Settle, Foot / Head, Layer, Pendulum are a few we can remember.

Anne Bulling, our Birchanger Class Representative writes:

"I would like to say how impressed I was with James' workshop (Maldon June 9th). I was only able to attend for one day but as a retired teacher I was impressed with his organisation and all round structure of the day. Everything had a purpose with continuity".

We look forward to seeing them again in the future either here in the UK or at other International Workshops around the world. Keep an eye open for information which will appear on the ETCA website and perhaps consider a holiday incorporating a workshop along the way.

FYI

Some of our classes have begun to introduce associated forms which hopefully will add interest to the regular class formats as well as continuing the overall focus on improving health.

If you are interested in the possibility of learning Yi Jin Jing, Bad Wa Jing, Qijong, or Fan please have a word with your instructor.

Current Responsibilities

Chair	Judy Lee-Fenton
Vice-Chair	Lisa Kay
Treasurer	Jan Newton
Membership & Web-site	Trevor Endacott
T- Shirts	Shirley Stone
Catering	Jan Bishop
Librarian	Pat Burke
Editors	Norma & Richard Herriott
Hall Research	Kim Clayton
Class Reps Co-ordinator	Liz Whyte

REMINDER: Quarterly subscriptions of £60 are due 1st October.
Please give these to your Class Representative.

DIARY DATES:

Sunday 13th October 10.00 – 16.00

Lok Hup Ba Fa part 2 workshop

Venue: St Ives Corn Exchange – Charter Hall, The Pavement, St Ives, Cambs.

Saturday 19th October 10.00

Class Representatives meeting

Venue: Olivers Nurseries, Maldon Road, Witham.

Tuesday 3rd December - Evening Christmas Dinner at Lians in Witham.

Details to be announced.

Saturday 25th January 2020 - Chinese New Year and AGM followed by Chinese Lunch.

Details to be announced.

Saturday 25th April 2020 - World Tai Chi Day.

Venue to be decided. Perform a Set at 10.00. Followed by Tai Chi practice and Lunch.

Details to be announced.

Editors' Plea

This has been a steep learning curve as neither of us have the professional skills of your former editor Jaqueline, a hard act to follow.

Armed with "Word for Dummies" we have ended up with this offering which we hope you have enjoyed reading. Apologies if the layout appears messy on whatever equipment you use. On our PC it's fine but on our iPhones/pads not so - however we cannot delay sending any longer.

You will no doubt have noticed that this newsletter does not contain as much historical or technical Tai Chi based information as previous ones. This is because we do not have the depth of knowledge, and sadly the time, to research such articles.

We rely on ETCA students and instructors to submit contributions which it is felt will be of interest to others. As editors we might sometimes tweak the comprehension but we will always ensure that the essence of any article is maintained. Thank you to everyone.

Norma and Richard.