



The Essex Tai Chi Academy Newsletter – April 2020

The Essex Tai Chi Academy runs classes in Tai Chi, Lok Hup Ba Fa, Sabre and Sword.

Classes are presently held at Birchanger, Black Notley, Burnham-on-Crouch, Cold Norton, Earls Colne, Felsted, Langford, Maldon and Mundon. Please enquire from your instructor which forms are taught where.

Hello everyone,

Whatever next! We thought the B word, Brexit, was enough to exhaust everybody's patience last year. Then the traumatic winter storms and floods came along. Now it's the C word, Corona or Covid, whichever you use, driving us all to distraction. With Spring now here and the thoughts of better weather we were looking forward to getting out and about in Essex and planning our holidays. All has come to a grinding halt. One way to escape the onslaught of news and media opinions, for even a short while, is to continue to practice our Tai Chi forms in the home, the garden or even the park as long we comply with the advice and guidelines relative to our own situation. So put the kettle on, make that drink and relax whilst reading our newsletter.

Cold weather at Mundon



The hardy Mundon Tai Chiers arrived one Monday morning to find the heating not working in the hall. Not to be defeated they bravely, but carefully, did some warmup exercises before performing a set. Never has the sound of the kettle boiling been more welcome.

Hopefully with some Spring sunshine we can all continue to enjoy our Tai Chi classes more appropriately dressed than shown.

Class Representatives' Forum

Only 5 forum members were able to attend on February 8th.

Topics discussed included:

Administration of subscription payments.

A Tai Chi book list.

Dates for future events and workshops.

Recording class instruction to provide continuity for visiting instructors

AGM

Our 2020 AGM was held on 25th January at Flich Green School and attended by 31 members with another 39 who had sent their apologies. After approving the Minutes for the 2019 AGM, our Chair, Judy Lee Fenton, gave her report which outlined the success of the changes since the last AGM due to everyone contributing. The total membership stands at 105 active members with another 6 on a break. Classes are now operating in 9 venues. A new evening Beginners' class will be opening shortly and possibly another in Chelmsford at a date yet to be decided.

A brief outline was provided regarding our first International Tai Chi Workshop taken by James Elser from Canada. Members from Cambridge, Shropshire and Suffolk attended this and other workshops led by Doug and Susan Overholt, James Elser and Marc Levy. Fifty five Members and guests attended our annual subsidised Christmas Meal at the Lian Restaurant.

Other reports were provided by Jan Newton - Treasurer, Pat Burke - Librarian, Liz Whyte - Forum Chair, Shirley Stone regarding the T-shirts for the Year of the Rat, Lisa Kay - Deputy Chair covering details of a number of workshops planned for 2020. Richard Herriott thanked contributors to our Newsletter, seeking more contributions from our classes and profiles of our Instructors.



Following an enjoyable shared lunch it was agreed that to finish off our successful AGM a Tai Chi set should be performed.

Thanks to all the organisers and helpers.

Meet your Instructor



My interest in the martial arts started when I was in college. We had a number of free sessions for activities and I used that time primarily to represent the college in football and gymnastics. I subsequently joined the Judo Club and practised falling, grappling, throws, sweeping your opponent with the foot to throw them off balance and wrestling until submission. I was one of the taller in my group which gave me some advantages but also a distinct disadvantage. Shorter opponents had a lower centre of gravity and they mastered the technique of swivelling their bodies into and below my centre of gravity. The result? Being thrown over my opponent's back onto the mat several times as I did not have the bulk, or the skill perhaps, to prevent this from happening. Severe loss of dignity!

In the late 1960's, I saw an advert for a new Karate School which was opening in Stratford, East London. I joined the six-week beginners' course and learnt some basic moves. This Kyokushinkaikan style was just one of a number of styles, others being Wado Ryu and Shotokan. Kyokushin in Japanese means 'ultimate truth' and was founded by Masutatsu Oyama in 1964. At this time, there were a number of films featuring Karate with stars such as Bruce Lee and I think that a number of young male attendees imagined themselves in these roles. However, after completing the beginners' course, the training changed to much more extreme and intense sessions which were based on self improvement and discipline. Hardly surprising that over half the members left.

Over time, we learnt the many varieties of punching, blocking, kicking, spending hours repeating the same technique almost to exhaustion. We would practise in lines facing each other and practising these moves at speed until we could focus so well that our punches, hand strikes and kicks came within an inch of the opponent. The most enjoyable and interesting sessions involved putting the moves into ever more complicated fast sequences named Katas simulating attacking and defending against imaginary opponents. If you are interested, go to Youtube and see just how fast Karate players are at such events as World Championships especially the coordination of the trios.

Our senior Instructor Steve Arneil was, at that time the highest graded black belt outside Japan. Steve is now 86 years old, a 10th Dan and has the title of Hanshi (Honourable Master).

I started Tai Chi in September 2007 after meeting a neighbour who practised locally and was a member of the Taoist Society. Mary Dann was my first Instructor. I subsequently joined the ETCA on 1st December 2009 at Black Notley for Tai Chi, followed by Lok Hup Ba Fa in Mundon in January 2010 and Sword, Sabre and Lok Hup Ba Fa in Black Notley in February 2013.

In late 2010, a few of us were invited by Mike Baker Rogers and Mary Dann to become Instructors and we underwent a training programme over a few Saturday morning sessions. I was appointed Instructor in January 2011.

Why am I interested in Tai Chi and instructing? Well, my background in martial arts is part of the answer as, although Tai Chi is not taught as a martial art I can see many links which help me to focus on some of the moves with a disciplined approach. In this respect, there is always at least one Tai chi session at a Kyokushinkai workshop lead by Steve Arneil. Secondly, Tai Chi has certainly assisted in maintaining my general health, memory and flexibility particularly for playing golf as we get older.

As for teaching, there is no doubt in my mind that trying to impart aspects of Tai Chi which I hope I have learnt from other Instructors, such as Mary, Mike and from Canada, continues to improve my Tai Chi. Plus, I enjoy working with others in our classes, receiving feedback and questions from members which challenges my understanding of my form.

David Woollcott



Tribute to Mrs Kwan

Six members of the Essex Tai Chi Academy had the great privilege of meeting Mrs Kwan in June 2018. We were visiting Toronto, Canada for the Celebration workshops and Tributes to Master Moy Lin-Shin, 20 years since he had passed over.

Mrs Kwan, an acknowledged student of Master Moy and renowned instructor, came to the workshop. Gave us precious moments of her time, as she talked and shared (through her interpreter) about her life, Tai Chi, her memories of Master Moy and demonstrated some moves, a really magical moment.

At 94 years of age, her great ability and passion for Tai Chi shone forth, her personal energy phenomenal. An example to us all.

Now at the age of 95 Mrs Kwan is retiring. ETCA gladly sent Mrs Kwan a retirement card, photos of our group and our meeting, with many grateful thanks for her years of dedication. In return we received this acknowledgement for ETCA and Eastern Counties.

Dear Eastern Counties and Essex Tai Chi Academies,

I am very happy and honored to receive your letter, photos and retirement cards. Your thoughtfulness is much appreciated. I will treasure your gift and friendship for the rest of my life.

I am proud that your academies are non-profit organizations, operate by volunteer instructors and helping others in the community. That is what our teacher, Master Moy Lin Shin values, to volunteer, to help and assist others in the community, to teach the Taoist Tai Chi Arts to all who wish to learn to promote good health.

At age 60 I dedicated 15+ years to learn Taoist Tai Chi, Lok Hup Ba Fa, Tai Chi sword and Xing Yi Quan from Master Moy Lin Shin. I was privileged to travel with Master Moy to teach and conduct workshops around the world. The memory of meeting so many nice people in the workshops is still vivid in my mind, even after three decades.

In the last 20 years I volunteered to teach Master Moys style of Tai Chi and Lok Hup Ba Fa five days a week and conduct workshops in Canada's Major cities. Master Moys Tai Chi is an internal art of health, it strengthened our muscles and improve balance, it relaxes our mind and body. My dedication and love of Tai Chi has kept me teaching until I am 95. I practice both internal and external moves and research how Master Moys Tai Chi can further improve our well-being and hope to benefit more people.

Now at age 95 I just formally retired from teaching in Toronto, Ontario but I keep active in the area where I reside. My love of Master Moys Tai Chi and Lok Hup Ba Fa will continue to live with me in my daily life.

I hope you all can continue to excel in Master Moys Tai Chi Arts, to help and benefit more people in your city and beyond.

I wish you all well and continue to teach others and learn to enjoy Tai Chi wherever you are. Let Tai Chi become part of your daily life.

Best Regards to you all

Mrs Kwan,
Toronto,
Canada

With many many thanks to Mrs Kwan and wishing her contentment, peace and joy in her retirement.

Judy Lee-Fenton Chair ETCA

A younger student's thoughts.

It's never too late to learn

In my early youth I used to stand on the corner of our street waiting for my mates, to go and play football on the local park. Determined to practise some of the moves I'd seen the stars of Leicester City F.C. do the Saturday before.

I started learning Tai Chi just over a year ago, and my memory these days is not so good as far as remembering the moves is concerned. So I've borrowed a video and try to practise the ones that I've learned so far. But the man in the video is facing me as I watch, so he is doing the moves in a mirror image of me, which means I have to try some of the moves 3 or 4 times before getting it right – then I've forgotten them again by the next time I practise!

However it's a great little group here at Mundon village hall with our ever-encouraging teacher Judy. As usual with such groups there are 'the ones who KNOW' and who stand at the corners, then there are the rest of us at various stages along the path. Having said that, there is no sense of superiority amongst the participants, the only divide being that the men usually do the washing up after a cuppa. We love it though (don't we Richard?).

I think I'm up to about move 50 on the list (Kick with left foot) but I am very determined to learn the complete set. Mainly because it is a great discipline to have at this later stage in life (69) where memory is challenging. I know that when I complete the whole 108 moves (sometime in Autumn?) I will feel ecstatic my life will have regressed – I'll go back to standing on corners !

Dave Ellis

James Elser writes from Canada

To all my newly found friends in the United Kingdom,

Dear friends,



I wanted to write this letter to express my extreme gratitude for the grace, hospitality and kindness that was given to me during my stay in the UK. I was taken care of like I was a close friend even though most of you did not know me.

During my time in the UK I learned so much about the culture, the food, the history and the lifestyle within the many of the regions. Many of you took time out of your life to chauffeur me around to see the sights. I shared parts of my life with you and you shared yours with me. I was able to form bonds with people that I hardly knew that will last a lifetime. We laughed together, shed tears together, did tai chi together and ate together. I felt very blessed to have met you all and share all those special moments.

I often commented on how much ALL the people at workshops would absorb the information presented. It truly was my pleasure to pass on what I know and to watch people take in and work hard to understand the tai chi concepts. As a collective you have a very special thing amongst yourselves and I can see the care and diligence you take in preserving and growing that culture of the tai chi arts.

My trip to the UK changed me. It helped me see some things differently. It helped me resolve some things within myself. I was hoping that this trip was going to change me. It is because of all of you in some way that has helped me. I thank you immensely for that.

In case people were wondering, I am doing very well now and adjusting to 'Canadiana' life.

I very much look forward to coming back and seeing you all and working with you again. It truly was a pleasure and inspiration. Thank you!

With much love

James

Energy centres in Tai Chi

Our Chair Judy is a member of Essex Theosophical Society in Maldon and regularly shares her knowledge relative to Tai Chi during her class instruction. In the first of a series of articles Judy takes a look at the main energy centres in Tai Chi

Yong quarn, Bubbling Spring.

This centre is in the approximate area of the ball of your foot. It is your connection with the energy of this planet. Root Energy enters and starts its journey through the body. This centre, also, acts as anchor to the ground, so imagine roots, growing through into the ground, anchoring you firmly to the planet and the roots spreading down to extract the energy of the planet

This starts the journey of the energies, your GongFu (effort done over time that creates knowledge and ability)

Lao Gong.

Translated, Labour Palace. A centre in the palm of your hand, which opens when doing Tai Chi drawing energy of nature into your body, straight up your arms into your heart area. If this centre is tapped by your fingers at any time it will produce a flush of the energy to aid you.

Hu Kau

The centre of the tigers mouth. As you stretch open your tigers mouth, this activates this centre which then produces a universal energy which aids and abets with the Lao Gong

Ming Meu

Gateway of life, on the spine, almost opposite the naval this takes the other forementioned energy, stores it, with your pre-natal energy and feeds the kidneys.

Bai Hu

Gathering of the hundreds It is where your Yang energy is stored. Connected to the crown centre on the top of your head. This centre when tapped a few times helps with dizziness, headache, memory loss, insomina.

Tai Chi Books

ETCA has a book library, maintained by Pat Burke, and members can borrow books for a short period (say 3 months) to learn more about Tai Chi and develop their interest in the art. However, there are many other publications out there for those who wish to learn more about the health benefits we all aim to achieve through our Tai Chi.

Toni Walsh, our Black Notley instructor, has kindly offered the following review which we hope you will take time to read as it offers much food for thought.

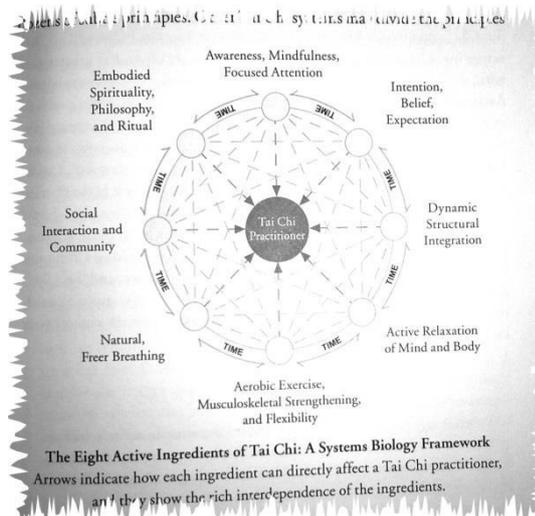
Book Review – Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi

One of my strong memories of Mr Moy's visits to the UK is from an instructor workshop on one of his last visits. A subtle theme of these later workshops which I only recognized in retrospect was that he was quietly grooming us to take responsibility for our own Tai Chi and to become independent of his direct instruction and leadership. On this particular occasion he told us that we should try to understand our Tai Chi from a Western perspective because that was how we, as westerners, had grown up to understand the world.

This book is one which can help us in that endeavor. It is a substantial tome of some 300+ pages, including about 50 devoted to references to scientific research papers. There are three parts to the book: the first introduces the reader to the basic principles of Tai Chi theory with reference to the Chinese classical understanding and the authors' interpretation of this in Western terms; the second part investigates Tai Chi's effects on the body and mind "through the lens of modern science"; and the third part explains various ways in which we can integrate our Tai Chi into daily life.

One element of the book impressed me: "the Eight Active Ingredients" of Tai Chi. As the author says, "like the components of a multi-drug combination to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, each ingredient is believed to have an impact on the physiology of the body", and "[Tai Chi's] multilevel effects are especially important for complex chronic diseases that involve many systems throughout the body", such as all the interactions within the body which affect how well the heart functions (or in my own situation, the gut). The Eight Active Ingredients as described in the book are:

1. **Awareness** (including mindfulness and focused attention) – the emphasis on moment-to-moment awareness results in mindfulness and improved focus
2. **Intention** (including belief and expectation) – contributing to the therapeutic and physiological effects of Tai Chi
3. **Structural Integration** (including dynamic form and function) – the patterns of movement have functional consequences across many systems
4. **Active Relaxation** – Tai Chi as a form of meditation in motion
5. **Strengthening and Flexibility** – Tai Chi as a moderate aerobic and strengthening exercise
6. **Natural, Freer Breathing** – more efficient breathing improves mood, among other effects
7. **Social Support** (including interaction and community) – being part of a group has proven therapeutic value
8. **Embodied Spirituality** (including philosophy and ritual) – the ritual-like practice of Tai Chi can amplify its therapeutic benefits.



These are illustrated as a complete framework in this diagram from the book, in which it is possible to see the influence of the Chinese Yin/Yang principle as in the opposite positioning of Awareness at the top (Yang) and Musculoskeletal Strengthening (Yin) at the bottom. I also recognize some patterns from my former astrology studies, but that's a different matter!

While we concentrate in our classes on **how** we do Tai Chi, it's much more difficult to explain **why** we do it, and more importantly **what** the Tai Chi is doing for us. I recommend this book to anybody who wants a

western insight into what we're doing for ourselves, and each other, when we do our Tai Chi.

The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi by Peter M Wayne, PhD, with Mark L Fuerst; Shambala Publications.

ISBN 978-1-59030-942-1

Workshop News

Sabre Workshop

Hemingford Abbots

Sunday March 8th

With Steve Alsop from Eastern Counties leading the instructing we settled down to a workshop attended by 34 members which turned out to be informative and interesting.

All visiting instructors were asked to take part by demonstrating an exercise or move of their choice. This added to the diversity of the day.

With a bring your own lunch it also became a social event and overall it was an excellent day.

Judy Lee-Fenton

Current Situation and future news

As recently advised and following Government and WHO advice all ETCA classes and events are suspended. As soon as it is safe to do so classes will restart.

Whilst we will do our best to produce the next quarterly newsletter in July it is important that we all keep in touch and maintain our shared Tai Chi interest during these unprecedented times.

Nick Boddington and Toni Walsh are working together to produce a fortnightly news and question sheet. Plus a site where we can chat to each other.

This is a great idea and we hope that you will give them and everyone your full support.

Look out for "Keeping us together" which will be reaching your mailbox shortly.

From your Editors

Thank you to everyone who has sent in contributions and supported our efforts.

As editors we might sometimes tweak the comprehension but we will always ensure that the essence of any article is maintained. Your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that you will take care and stay safe whilst we all fight this invisible war, and to use Judy's words 'we emerge like butterflies one day and start again'.

Norma and Richard.