



Tai Chi Newsletter

<https://www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk>

<https://www.kaiming.co.uk>



Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel

call: 0121 251 6172

<https://www.taichinewsletters.co.uk> e-mail us: markpeters@kaiming.co.uk



Looking back over 30+ years.

Sometimes it's hard to believe that it's 30 years since I first formed Kai Ming, and even longer since I started my tai chi journey. Below is a short reflection on my search for the real art.

My Quest for Tai Chi Chuan as a Martial Art

My journey into Tai Chi Chuan began almost by accident in the late 1980's. Initially, Jenny and I were looking through a night school brochure for something to do when Tai Chi just seemed to jump out. I had read about the benefits of Tai Chi—how it promotes relaxation, enhances balance, and increases flexibility. The local classes just seemed to offer the gentle exercise approach to tai chi, but I knew it was much more than that; it was a profound martial art.

Seeking Deeper Knowledge

Determined to explore this aspect further, I sought out teachers who specialised in the martial applications of Tai Chi chuan. I attended workshops and seminars, read books, and watched countless videos. I learned that Tai Chi Chuan, which translates to "Supreme Ultimate Fist," was originally developed as a martial art centuries ago in China. It was designed to be a complete system of self-defence, focusing on internal strength and energy flow rather than brute force.

Discovering the Forms

As I practised, I began to see the martial intent behind each movement. For instance, the "Grasp Sparrow's Tail" sequence, which I had initially performed with a meditative focus, revealed its potential as a series of offensive and defensive manoeuvres. "Ward Off" could redirect an opponent's energy, "Rollback" could neutralise a force, "Press" applied forward pressure, and "Push" could off-balance an attacker.

This newfound understanding transformed my practice. I moved with more purpose, visualising the martial applications as I flowed from one posture to the next. The practice became more dynamic and engaging. I wasn't just moving through forms; I was training my body and mind for combat, albeit in a controlled and peaceful manner.

The Role of Push Hands

One of the most significant discoveries on my journey was the practice of push hands (Tui Shou). Push hands is a partner exercise that develops sensitivity, balance, and the ability to yield and redirect an opponent's force. At first, it felt awkward and confusing. My partner and I would move in circles, trying to uproot each other without using strength. Gradually, I began to understand the subtleties of yielding, sticking, and following. I learned to listen to my partner's energy and respond with calmness and precision.

Integrating Mind and Body

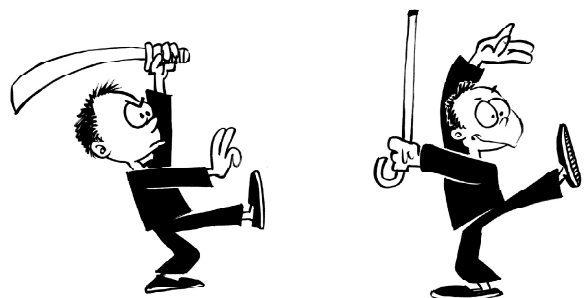
Through this process, Tai Chi became a comprehensive system of self-defence and personal development. The emphasis on relaxation, proper alignment, and internal energy cultivation made it unique. It wasn't just about defeating an opponent; it was about understanding oneself, cultivating inner peace, and moving with harmony and balance.

The Ongoing Journey

My search for Tai Chi Chuan as a martial art has been incredibly rewarding. It has taken me around the world to train and compete. It has deepened my appreciation for the art and enriched my life in countless ways. I've gained physical strength, improved my mental focus, and developed a more profound sense of inner calm. Tai Chi has taught me that true martial arts are not about aggression or dominance but about balance, awareness, and harmony; it is a self-defence for life.

This journey is ongoing. Each practice session reveals new layers and insights, and I continue to learn from my teachers, my practice partners, and my own experiences. Tai Chi Chuan is more than a martial art to me; it's a path of lifelong learning and self-discovery. I'm grateful for the journey and excited for where it will take me next.

By Mark Peters



Here are two contributions from John & Lynne Jenkins students.

TAI CHI – WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

I haven't been involved with Tai Chi until fairly recently. I hadn't really given it much thought until talking to a friend and neighbour.

A year ago I fell and broke my wrist, and following this, I developed CRPS (Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome). I needed Physio for

10 months plus. Arthritis also progressed to the point where I could not make a fist or lift my arm above waist level.

I spent years as an athlete and dancer and have paid the price with my joints.

Tai Chi has helped me so much. It has improved my flexibility and I feel more supple. I can now lift my arm above my head, and its

All down to the slow, calm exercises undertaken during my Tai Chi sessions.

Ann Holland, Student. Wilnecote Parish Hall. Tamworth

I FOUND IT AGAIN

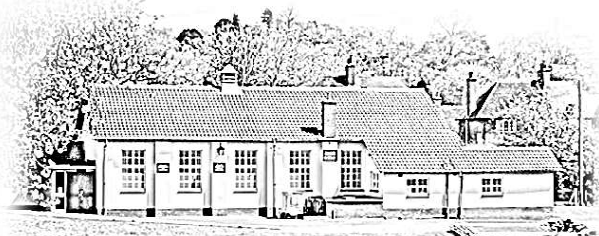
I had wanted to try Tai Chi for decades but never got around to it. But now I am so glad I found a local group in Tamworth and rediscovered a piece of me I lost some time ago.

Years ago I was suffering stress and anxieties at work and was steered towards Mindfulness practices. They were not for me but it opened my eyes to meditation. With practice, I could quieten my mind for short periods. This led me to a local crystal shop that ran guided crystal-accompanied meditations, so I joined a few. There I experienced the power of breathing techniques which were very calming, and how to focus my mind but also had some strange experiences in the sessions. One of these I called the magnet sphere thingy, the shop owner said I had tuned and focussed my own energy.

The arrival of the pandemic changed the way we work and the use of our home resulting in there being no space free from interruptions. I stopped meditating. Increased work-related stress gave me acute insomnia for months and none of the suggested NHS remedies helped. In desperation, I tried hypnotherapy which gave me another awakening as it was so close to meditation. At work on Rail WellBeing Live, I saw Mark Peters run a Tai Chi session, I kept his details and found a local Kai Ming group in Tamworth.

My neurodiverse mind struggled to remember the moves but I persevered and started enjoying it. The last part of the session we stood palms upwards facing the sky, then changed to palms down facing towards the earth, then palms facing each other 8 inches apart. It felt like my hands were two opposing magnets pushing apart, not strongly, but nonetheless feeling like resisting each other. I smiled as I realised it was back, that magnetic sphere sensation which we might call Chi energy. I look forward to this part of the lessons, with my eyes closed. I know I am smiling; I don't understand it, I don't need to...just as long as I don't lose it again.

Nige Jones, Tamworth



Tai Chi Weekend September 2024

Each year we have a focus for the weekend camp and this year's is the **30th Anniversary of Kai Ming Association for Tai Chi Chuan.**

Saturday 7th – The day will cover the 18 lower-hand form taught in Malaysia and developed by Yue Shu Ting, one of Prof. Cheng's senior students.

The form was added to the end of the 37 to practice some additional aspects of the original Yang style.

This has never been taught in the UK.

We will be having a viewing on Saturday of the **“Professor Cheng Man Ching's Journey West”** documentary which is hard to find now as most participants have now passed.

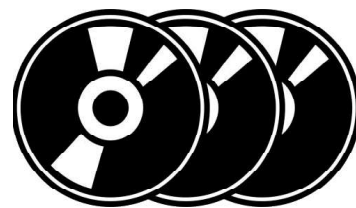
Cost

The cost per day will be £40 per person (Kai-Ming members)
£60 (non-members)

More details at <https://shorturl.at/3qV01>

Venue:

Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville. B29 4AR.



Kai Ming DVDs go Digital

Due to increasing demand, I have eventually started to create a digital option for my DVDs. This means you can buy a physical DVD or buy digital access online.

The first two done are:

1. Cheng Man Ching 37 step form
2. Tai chi for self-defence

All DVDs, books and tops are listed at
<https://kaiming.co.uk/shop.html>



Happy Birthday Lynne Jenkins

On 27th July Lynne turned 80 and on the 29th her 3 Tai Chi classes (Wilnecote Parish Hall and St Editha's Church Hall) managed to render her speechless when we surprised her with a beautiful garden ornament.

It was quite a tricky task to organise the collection and signing of the card without Lynne suspecting a thing, but we managed to pull it off.

Happy Birthday Lynne, from all your students and fellow instructors.



A Bear on the loose

I have always included 'Bear' in my Tai Chi classes - interspersed with Huang's 5 Loosening exercises (Sung Shen Wu Fa), basic forms of Silk Reeling (Chan Si Gong), and a selection from the many sequences that are 'warm up' exercises in preparation for the Qigong and Form work that follow. All of the movements selected are geared to relaxing and releasing, to loosen muscles and joints, to develop body awareness, balance and co-ordination, and to gradually introduce in students a sense of 'connection' as they practise changing weight, direction, etc.

By far the most effective of these is focussing on 'Constant Bear' - so when in the July Newsletter we had an Article about 'Cheng Man-Ch'ing' (CMC) and 'Constant Bear', I decided to really focus on the movement. My hope was that by experiencing first hand a more 'in depth' practise of 'Constant Bear' that the students in my classes would be able to relate to the article as they read it. In addition, I hoped that instead of just following my lead in Class when we practise 'Bear', they would be able to 'internalise' Constant Bear and use it practically within the different situations we find ourselves in our everyday life.

We are all unique and our shared experiences affect us differently. Similarly, each Kai Ming and 'Painting the Rainbow' group has a different group dynamic. Students function at different levels of skill and experience from complete beginners to advanced, and with different levels of fitness from the highly trained

athlete to those managing the challenges of a chronic medical condition, and other challenges posed by restricted mobility, or the emotional constraints of acute anxiety.

In Tai Chi each student is on their own journey, some more confident than others, some more experienced. So to really focus on body awareness, on body alignment while releasing the various parts of the body, weight sinking down into the feet (or 'seat' if sitting) can be a new experience for a number of students.

To be equal weighted may be familiar, but to concentrate on the Dan-tien, to then sink down into the feet, head up as if suspended from above, feeling as if a pole is down the centre of the body into the ground, as if 'rooted', giving stability - but relaxed, not feeling 'rigid' or 'stiff', triggered an awareness in many that had not happened before.

To move weight and have the same 'pole' feeling down just the one leg - and then to completely transfer to the other and to replicate the feeling, rather than moving across only part of the way, has enabled some to feel truly 'balanced' for the first time.

To achieve the gentle, flowing movement of 'Constant Bear' there are many 'hidden' skills that need to be taken on board...

Students in every group showed real commitment as they practised.

Once awareness of balance was understood, practising the slow swing across, and turn using the whole torso, while keeping both feet on the floor, required further focus.

So much to think about - making sure that the hip is not 'pushed out' sideways in the move across to the other leg, causing the spine to be out of line Once there, imagining turning as a door hanging on a central shaft and rotating outward round a vertical axis, but without the stiffness and rigidity - keeping the head in line with the centre of the body, the navel, as it turns, not turning it independently - have all contributed to create a feeling of 'connection' throughout the movement.

The complete 'game changer', however, was when I introduced the additional concept of the 'Looking Owl' sitting on the head. Keeping the head up as if suspended from above, not slouched forward - neck relaxed, not held stiffly above shoulders, made a real difference.



Many students noted that the clavicle area below the neck seemed more 'open', and that they felt 'lighter', and more 'composed'.

Having done all the groundwork, we then put it to the test - when carrying out a Qigong applying the newly acquired 'awareness' of relaxation, sinking, body alignment while changing weight and/or direction, and 'flow'.... when practising The Form, to perform it in 'Bear' - up to the first 'Roll Back', to 'Single Whip', to Cross Hands, and for the Advanced students through the whole CMC 37 step Form.

The fascinating outcome of studying 'Constant Bear' is that each group has demonstrated similar reactions some 'observable' in their 'Form' and Qigong', others reporting their 'feelings' as they repeat the regular, gentle movements whilst paying attention, being 'mindful', focussing.

Students have 'relaxed' and felt greater 'flow' and balance when practising a Qigong sequence - others have vastly improved in the execution of their Form. The 'Single Whip' and 'Brush Knee' moves have more meaning, the 'turns' have increased balance, and intent. Students have said that they 'understand' better what is required not just physically, but internally.

Practising the regular flowing movement from one side to the other in 'Constant Bear' has had a major impact.

Gentle movement at a constant speed - not too fast to 'rush' the movement and by so doing cutting out, eliminating, the feeling of calmness, of moving through air in a loose, but controlled way, and building inner strength - not too slowly to 'stop' the continuous flow - has held real meaning.

Staying 'aware' of yourself carrying out the movements - the change in direction - not letting the mind 'wander' as the sequence is repeated keeping the eyes relaxed but staying focussed, not looking around at objects, or activities going on nearby, and by so doing allowing the mind to 'wander' and lose concentration - have all added to the overall experience.

This experience has spurred one student to resort to verse!
In her words - "The feeling of relaxation, harmony and lightness of moves was such a benefit."

Tai Chi group...'Be aware of the 'BEAR'

Our coach introduced us to 'Bear'
To practice the 'Form' flow with flair,
Move a mountain like a feather,
A big thanks to Heather...
We enjoyed every moment to share.

To relax and to feel floaty light,
Shifting our weight left to right,
Improving our balance,
And our mindset enhance,
'Diagonal' and 'Cranes' take to flight.

And so, we are all made aware...
Of the benefits of doing 'The Bear',
'This one single move
Puts Tai Chi' in the groove
As Cheng Man-Ch'ing once did declare.

Listening to what practising 'Constant Bear' has meant to students outside of their Tai Chi classes, makes one realise just

how much influence a correct interpretation of a move, or sequence of moves, in Tai Chi can have on our quality of life generally.

Using the techniques used in 'Constant Bear' has assisted when moving a heavy object like a chair, or a large bag of garden compost. The relaxed but balanced 'posture', head up with an 'open' feeling has given some a feeling of 'empowerment'; for others this has given them an increased feeling of 'confidence' when needing to face-up to an unpleasant situation like censure at work, or receiving test results from a Consultant, enabling them to maintain their equilibrium. Some students have reported practising the move in their head at bedtime has enabled them to fall asleep easier, and some battling short or long term anxiety have described the benefit that the calming, repetitive movement has had, even just sitting and visualising themselves doing the actions.

Do we now have a better understanding of what Cheng Man-Ch'ing meant when he said of 'Constant Bear'...." This one single move is tai chi - there is nothing more than this" ?
Very definitely !

Was it worth all our efforts - absolutely !
by Heather Lomas

Membership Update News

The news on reduced membership and improved support has been really well received.

Annual membership will remain at £15 for all new first-year memberships and still include a FREE club T-shirt. Renewals will be reduced to £10 from April 2024 and we're still able to keep T-shirt prices at £10 and hoodies at £25 for members.

Plus, the annual weekend camp in September will still be £20 cheaper for members at only £40 per day.

Advanced monthly training sessions.

Sessions are held each month for 3 hours at Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville, to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi chuan.

Sessions are Sunday's 9.30-12.30 at £30 per person.

What3words locatoin <https://w3w.co/pits.level.cake>

Training in 2024 starts with

11th August
6th October
10th November

**Weekend camp – 9.30am to 4pm
Saturday 7th September**