



# Tai Chi Newsletter

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Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

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## Tai Chi Waves



Over the years of assisting and teaching with my husband, Mark, at his Tai Chi classes one of the most often asked questions by the students of this art has been “So what should I be feeling when I practise the form?”

Most are at the stage where they have been training for a while and are now able to perform the whole form smoothly, and without having to stop at some point having forgotten the next move. By the time students reach this point, they want to be able shift the focus of practice from “Oh dear that move didn’t feel quite right”, and maybe feel the benefits of improved postures and free flowing movements

Until a few weeks ago my standard reply after thinking initially about my own experiences within the years of my practice, was to tell them “There is no right answer to this, what you feel from one week to another may change.”

Most people comment on the relaxation and “feel good factor” the form work gives them, and is the reason most seek out a Tai Chi class in the first place. Some are happy to accept this new oasis of calm their practice gives them. Others as they progress on the Tai Chi journey want or hope to experience many things more. Now all thought it has taken me 15 years of living and breathing the art (being the partner of a Principle instructor is not always a perk) I think I can answer the afor said enquiry in a perhaps more informed way, having what many call “A breakthrough” or some less kindly perhaps comment “ What took you so long!”

Having learnt the form myself (after some traumatic episodes where I really thought I would never remember the postures,) I have always enjoyed the graceful moves and the feeling of achievement that I get when I perform the closing posture. There were times over the years when I really thought this time would elude me. If I am honest I felt that this was enough. Many

students don’t even get through the first 10 weeks of training. The CHEN MAN CHING form we practice is simplified, not simple (a quote from that great master) and many in this frantic world we live in find that if instant results cannot be achieved, it is easier to leave than persevere. What happened to the phrase “Anything worth having takes patience and time to acquire?” I can understand their feelings.

Maybe if Mark had not bribed me with sums of money amounting to figures I am unwilling to disclose to help in the class each week, I may have gone the same way. Anyway as I said until a few weeks ago I was satisfied with where I was. I have heard my husband speak in class about letting the feeling of a wave flow through your body when running through the form. I had never really thought about this too much, but one evening at one of the regular classes we run I commenced Lift Hands (one of the opening moves) and thought lets give this “Wave” a go!

There is a saying in Tai Chi “where the mind goes the Chi goes” which I define as where the mind goes the focus goes, so I thought the best place to start the “wave” was at the fingertips. With each posture I focused on my hand, and as my shoulders relaxed, then my elbows I had a feeling of a wave of relaxation going through my muscles and spreading throughout my body. As I moved slowly through the form this pleasant experience continued. So that is what he’s been talking about I thought as I finished. Now I try to achieve this each time

Although my husband assures me I don’t look like an octopus! I sometimes liken the feeling I get to how the tentacles move. Almost as if something is travelling along them smoothly and silently. Cutting effortlessly through the water. Ahh if only! I can just about cope with co-ordinating 4 limbs let alone 8! Before I began Tai Chi, as a nurse I very often suffered high levels of stress and at one point tried listening to relaxation tapes. Problem was if you have ever tried this you will know that by the time you have taken the phone off the hook, put a do not disturb notice on the front door, shut the dog in the kitchen, turned off your mobile phone, set the tape up to run and managed to get that lumpy cushion in a comfortable area of your back the LAST thing you can do is relax your mind enough to listen to the flipping tape. You are thinking about all the important phone calls you might be missing, the dog is scratching the door to get to you, to the point that he’s left half of his nails in

it, and the woman next door is trying to peer through the curtains to see if you are in fact in and alright and what's going on that you don't want to be disturbed from!!!!!!!

I only once achieved my goal. This was done by closing the curtains downstairs, putting the tape on remote handset, and shutting the dog in the utility and giving him something to occupy his mind i.e. a piece of chocolate in plain site but too high for him to reach by jumping. I then sat in my recliner and as I felt the warmth that true relaxation brings spreading through my body I fell asleep and missed the important bits!!!!!!!

Unfortunately I was soon bought back to reality by the dog (by now suffering from chocolate deprivation mania) taking one last desperate leap for the prize and sending the free standing vegetable rack crashing into the table and knocking the bottle of milk off it, on to the floor where it promptly broke.!

Now that I have discovered Tai Chi and the "Wave" I can get the relaxation, the warmth, the feel good factor, and more importantly the dog no longer needs his Therapist! All this is available to anyone who starts their own Tai Chi journey. I cannot say how long it will take, or if they will ever get to the end, but the truth is doesn't matter just enjoy the ride!

By Jenny Peters



We're trying a new section in the newsletters – **Club Corner**.

Here is the first edition and we hope it inspires you to share yours too.



**Kai Ming in the Forest**  
(The story of the Rosliston Rollers - so far)

A loud "Hello" to all out there  
Inland, or by the sea .....  
All students of the gentle art  
Known worldwide as Tai Chi.

We practise our Form in a Forest,  
On the grass, or under a tree.  
Inside is just a luxury,  
When it's cold - the place to be.

Tai Chi can be for everyone -  
Of any age or creed,  
For health, or for the martial side  
A 'balance' is all you need.

Who are we? We are a new Kai Ming Class - that started in the Autumn of 2022, and we practise at Rosliston Forestry Centre in South Derbyshire. We are a mixed bunch - with very different backgrounds.

We have pooled our thoughts and ideas and would like to share them with you.

We are like many of the other groups in the Kai Ming family. A few of us have practised Tai Chi before in various parts of the country, some for many years, and different styles. For most of the Group though Tai Chi has been a completely new venture. Some have decided to try it for health reasons - to help with a bad back, and it has; to provide a workout when the gym was not an option because of dodgy knees; to help improve overall balance; to provide a calm period in an otherwise busy lifestyle; to help calm anxieties; or something to enjoy together with a relative or friend.

We all have our personal reasons for turning up every week, but once in the group we share .....

We share a sense of achievement when balance, co-ordination, memory (muscle or otherwise), all come together and we each manage to negotiate a 'move' - and then two, and maybe three. The internal feeling of 'pride' each has when arms, legs, weight and balance all work together - and we complete something each of us never thought possible at the start, gives us that 'feel good' factor everyone needs at some time.

We share the calming atmosphere of everyone performing a qigong sequence in unison; the gentle, and flowing movements as we learn to change weight correctly, to relax but not 'collapse' the body, and to become more aware of our breathing, are beginning to take effect - even if, at the end, we still wonder why we are feeling tired after such simple exercise!

Of course - it's not easy at the beginning, is it. One of us even wrote a poem to explain her frustrations:

Step right, step left, bend, arms free,  
That's how we roll in our class of Tai Chi.  
I began apprehensive, not knowing the score  
But each class I attend leaves me wanting some more.  
So I practise white crane, and throwing my tiger  
As [our Instructor] declares, stand straighter, feet wider.  
But I'm getting there slowly, my legs try their best  
As the class faces East, I find I've gone West.  
But it's fun and we laugh, as I knot legs with an arm  
There's humour and banter, no one means any harm.  
So I practise the Form in the hope that I might  
Turn up one week and perhaps get it right!

We share the difficult bits as well - all learning a new move in the Form together - realising you are not alone in not knowing your left from your right, or that placing your weight correctly actually makes you feel 'right'. Persevering in the group when you might have given up if you were on your own.

We also share the social side - of making new friends having a common interest, enjoying the banter, and no matter how challenging the journey having a laugh along the way.

We even shared the chocolates during Coronation Week - there are moves in Tai Chi just right for choosing the one you want !!

“We are right at the start of our Tai Chi journeys,  
 And determined to master the Art.  
 Our progress can be slow, and disjointed,  
 But we know more than we did at the start !  
 We try to relax and to move with grace,  
 To ‘flow like a rolling river’ -  
 But try as we might the practise of moves  
 Often leaves us with knees aquiver !  
 To commit to one leg as we step with the other,  
 To land on the heel, not the toe.  
 To Carry [our] Tigers to the Mountain -  
 In balance as we turn, still slow.  
 Though it may take us time to reach our goal,  
 Our intention is clear to see.  
 We will continue to practise, to work, and enjoy  
 To achieve what we seek - Tai Chi !”

We are enjoying our Tai Chi journey ..... how about letting us know about yours !

By Rosliston Kai Ming / Heather



### Confessions of a Pusher.

A few years ago, I had a revelation. One of those moments of absolute clarity when something that you previously did not understand, suddenly becomes perfectly obvious.



My moment of insight came shortly after the Spring Camp at Unstone Grange, and was caused by events at that camp. I had been pushing hands with a student who attends the class at which I assist. During the session, he managed to push me off-balance twice. How did I feel? Well, actually, I was pleased to see the increase in skill demonstrated by “my” student. I also felt that I was taking the occasional “defeat” well,....investing in loss. Lao Tsu wrote “Gentle the will in order to strengthen the bones”, and Cheng Man Ching taught that before one can aspire to the highest levels of Tai Chi Chuan abilities, the ego must be suppressed. He exhorts us to become mild and gentle in demeanour, rather than arrogant and over-inflated, and to invest in loss. Surely I was doing just that.

After a while, we changed partners, and I found myself standing opposite one of the most senior of our instructors. After ten minutes of earnest effort, I hadn’t once come near to disturbing this man’s equilibrium. He, on the other hand, with the softest of hands, had tipped, toppled, pulled, pushed and turned me to every point of the compass. How did I feel? Well, actually,....bloody frustrated! I berated myself for lack of sensitivity and little or no rooting ability, and resolved to get in a lot more Push Hands practice.

It was only some days later, when mulling over these events, that I suddenly thought, “Why was I not equally as pleased to invest in loss at the hands of one of my teachers, as I was at the hands of one of my students?” And then the blinding light hit me, like Saul on the road to Damascus. I hadn’t suppressed the old enemy - ego - after all. It was still there, as arrogant as ever. I took pleasure in being pushed off-balance by my student because it proved what a great teacher I am, imparting skills effortlessly. I didn’t react quite so well to being pushed by my teacher, because my ego couldn’t find a good enough excuse. Thanks to this insight, I’m on my guard again. I have renewed my battle to suppress the ego. I will treat every occasion that I am pushed off-balance as a tiny step in the learning process, no matter who does the pushing. I resolve to become a better person. Now where’s that newest student? I want to show him how easily I can uproot him.

By Mike Gibson

(To “invest in loss” was a phrase used by Grand-Master Cheng Man Ching to denote not meeting force with force, but to yield even to the extent of allowing oneself to be pushed off balance, for the sake of learning and experiencing the process, thereby becoming able to accommodate the push without losing balance)



### There Is No Transition

Do you remember those pre Tai Chi days when you used to get in your car or walk down the high street, and all of a sudden you were at your destination! The transition (or as I prefer to call it – the Journey) was ‘lost’. You missed the whole journey, experience, that’s part of your valuable life – your mind was ‘somewhere else’, or ‘a blank’, or focused on the end of the journey.

Whatever ‘valid’ reason you came up with – you missed the journey – you were basically not in full control, not with it, not consciously aware, not mindful, and not living in the second.

The same can be said (sometimes) of the macro level too – “don’t the weeks, year’s whiz by”.

With Tai Chi we have all learned to be present, mindful and aware.

So when doing the form (say) I now never think/feel I am moving from one ‘position’ to another. As every second, every sub-second of that journey is a unique flow. Sometimes both feet are on the ground – but always feeling the ground more with one foot than the other, always moving, sometimes one foot on the ground and the other off the ground, always feeling aligned with gravity.

But never stagnate, never stuck, never not moving - however slowly, however little the move. So I try and feel every sub-second as its own unique movement along that 5, 10, 15 minute continually following journey.

There is no transition – it is all a continual journey to be enjoyed.

*It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop. - Confucius*

## Recommended reading

There are many books worth reading that will greatly improve your appreciation and understanding of this wondrous art. Shown below are a few we feel are worthwhile, what do you recommend?

### Beginners

- Essential Guide to TCC by Alan Peck
- Supreme Ultimate by Laurence Galante
- TCC 10 minutes to health
- Book of Soft Martial Arts by Howard Reed

### Intermediate

- There are no secrets by Wolf Lowenthal
- Gateway to the Miraculous by Wolf Lowenthal
- Cheng Tzu's 13 treatises by Cheng Man Ching
- Complete book of TCC by Wong Kiew Kit

### Advanced

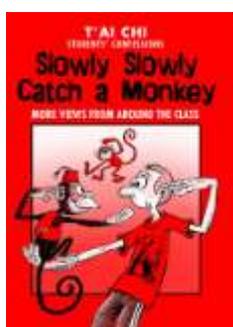
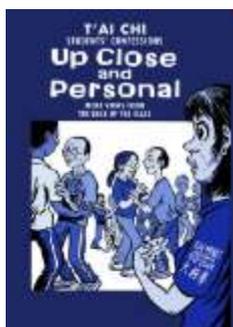
- Advanced form instruction by Cheng Man Ching
- Practical Chin Na
- Tao of Tai Chi Chuan
- Essence of Tai Chi Chuan by Ben Lo
- CMC master of 5 excellences by Mark Hennessey

### Books produced by Kai Ming Association for tai chi chuan

“View from the back of the class” series is a collection of works by instructors and students. Included are some really funny cartoons of the form too.

Cover art by Hunt Emmerson.

They are £10 each for Kai Ming Members and £12 for non-members.



## Tai Chi Weekend September 2023

Each year we have a focus for the weekend camp and this years theme is “Breathing life into your tai chi”

**Saturday 2nd** will include tai chi form work in the morning - Breath, intention, and expansion. The afternoon will focus on martial application without effort - sensitivity training, Sung, flow, and root.

**Sunday 3rd** You will be learning qigong (chi-kung). We will focus on the three refinements of mind, body, and breath.

### The days will run

- 9.30 for 10am start
- 10am to 12.30pm with a 10 minute break about 11.30am.
- Lunch 12.30 to 1.30pm – lunch
- 1.30pm to 4pm with a 10 minute break about 2.45pm

### Cost

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

More details at <https://shorturl.at/gtz06>

### Venue:

Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville. B29 4AR.

## 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.

### Below are training dates for 2023

July 9th

Aug 13th

Sept 2nd & 3rd – annual weekend camp – 9.30am to 4.00pm

October 8th

Nov 5th

