



Tai Chi Newsletter

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The Benefits of Practising Tai Chi and Qigong in the Spring

Spring is a season of renewal, a time when nature awakens from its winter slumber. For 2025 spring runs from Thursday 20th March through to Saturday 21st June.

As the days grow longer and the air becomes warmer, we often feel an instinctive urge to move, stretch, and breathe more deeply. This makes spring the perfect time to embrace the gentle yet powerful practices of Tai Chi and Qigong.

For me, there is something truly special about practising Tai Chi and Qigong in the spring. The energy of the season aligns beautifully with these arts, helping us shed the sluggishness of winter and step into a state of vitality and flow. Here are some of the key benefits of practising Tai Chi and Qigong during this transformative time of year.

1. Harnessing Spring's Energy for Renewal

In traditional Chinese medicine, spring is associated with the wood element, which represents growth, flexibility, and renewal. It is also linked to the liver, an organ responsible for detoxification and the smooth flow of energy (qi/chi) in the body. Tai Chi and Qigong exercises are particularly beneficial in spring because they encourage the release of stagnant energy and promote a fresh, vibrant sense of wellbeing.

By moving in harmony with the rhythms of nature, we can tap into the revitalising energy of spring. Flowing Tai Chi movements and deep, mindful Qigong breathing help clear blockages and invigorate both body and mind.

2. Improving Flexibility and Strength

After the colder months, many of us experience stiffness in our muscles and joints. Tai Chi and Qigong offer a gentle way to stretch and strengthen the body, improving flexibility without strain. The slow, deliberate movements allow us to release tension and encourage greater mobility. This is particularly beneficial for those who have been less active during winter or who experience joint discomfort.

Regular practice also helps to develop core strength and balance, reducing the risk of falls and injuries. The controlled postures of Tai Chi work the muscles in a low-impact yet highly effective way, making it suitable for all ages and fitness levels.

3. Boosting Energy and Reducing Stress

With the longer days and brighter mornings, spring offers a natural boost to our mood and energy levels. Tai Chi and Qigong amplify this effect, helping to clear mental fog and increase alertness. The combination of slow movements and focused breathing promotes relaxation and reduces stress, making it easier to embrace the changes and opportunities that spring brings.

As someone who has experienced the benefits of these practices first-hand, I find that just a short session in the morning leaves me feeling calmer, more centred, and ready to face the day. The gentle meditative nature of Tai Chi and Qigong encourages mindfulness, allowing us to let go of worries and appreciate the present moment.

4. Connecting with Nature

Practising Tai Chi and Qigong outdoors in spring is an especially rewarding experience. The fresh air, the sounds of birdsong, and the sight of new blossoms create a perfect environment for these flowing movements. Moving in sync with nature enhances our connection to the world around us, deepening our appreciation for the season and its transformative energy.

If you have never practised Tai Chi or Qigong outdoors, I encourage you to give it a try this spring. Find a quiet spot in a park or garden, take a deep breath, and allow yourself to move with the rhythm of nature. You may be surprised at how energising and grounding it feels. If you have never joined us for **tai chi in the park**, maybe now is the time. We have a Facebook group with 2000 members, and classes are listed on www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk

Embrace the Season with Tai Chi and Qigong

Spring is a time of fresh starts and renewed energy. By incorporating Tai Chi and Qigong into your routine, you can harness the vitality of the season, improve your health, and cultivate a sense of inner balance. Whether you are a seasoned practitioner or new to these arts, spring is the perfect time to step outside, move with awareness, and welcome the changes of the season with open arms.

So, why not embrace the spirit of renewal and continue your journey today? Your body, mind, and spirit will thank you.



Our journey from the back of the class

My tai chi journey started in October 2022. I'd seen an advertisement on Facebook for a class in Rosliston close to where I live so I thought I'd give it a try. I had done yoga before for many years but after some health issues in 2018 I struggled to be constantly on my knees in yoga. So I thought why not give tai chi a go.

I dragged my mum along for moral support. We both ended up loving tai chi & became members of Kai Ming. The group was small at first as it had only started in the September, but soon more & more people came. I remember I'd stand at the back & try & hide. The group was so friendly though I soon became comfortable & edged further forward to the front, so I could see my instructor better. I loved the warmups & qigong. The form was challenging at first, but I'd just try to break it down practicing each part at home until I was more confident. I would watch YouTube videos to help me practice.

In September 2023 my instructor, Heather, encouraged me to go to the weekend camp to learn the broadsword. My husband kindly took me to Birmingham on the Saturday, and it must have peaked his interest as in October he decided he wanted to give tai chi a go. He'd done martial arts for years previously, so we started going to Heather's class in Lichfield on a Thursday evening.

In the January we also helped out in Heather's new beginners class on the Wednesday before our class. Heather had said we had got potential to be junior instructors. So in the January we started going to the advanced monthly training sessions in Birmingham with Mark Peters. I've got to say I felt like a fish out of water and struggled with the martial side of tai chi as it was new to me. My husband (also named Mark) obviously found the martial side easier, but I guess everyone's different that's why I like tai chi were not in competition with each other just ourselves. We also started staying on a Thursday for the second lesson for the more advanced students. It has helped us immensely doing four classes a week.

In the last year or so we have both improved so much in the form and in our confidence. In the September we both went to the weekend camp and learnt the 18 lower hand form. For me it felt completely different to the previous year when I'd gone to the camp to learn the broadsword. I was more confident this time and felt I'd got more experience and found it easier to learn the sequence of the lower hand form.

So what tai chi has done for me is given me more confidence helped with my balance and strength it's helped me with my brain function learning all the moves and qigong sets. I am looking forward to learning more and more of what tai chi has to teach me and hopefully become a junior instructor so I can help others with their tai chi journey.

Tracey brooks - Rosliston/Lichfield classes

I have recently been asked if I would be interested in providing a few words on my journey from other martial arts to tai chi. My reason for taking up tai chi initially was posture, exercise and wellness for the future. Also my wife had started the

previous year. In my case my martial art experience of over a 30 year plus period mostly has been physical; wanting now to further my journey, tai chi has become the go to choice.

Even in my relatively short time in tai chi I have seen and experienced my strength, mobility, coordination, balance and confidence grow. As me and the wife now help out on a regular basis it has been a pleasure to see this growth in others too.

As with many people of our age group we become less mobile without even realising, whether it due to health issues or work or retirement, which then can affect all of the issues already mentioned.

Then there is the internal benefits (1) from breathing, whether it be to regulate the breathing to prevent anxiety or gradually increase lung capacity. (2) From the cognitive benefits as proved by many studies; the brain needs exercise too.

I continue to enjoy the journey of learning the truly mind and body art of tai chi chuan.

Mark Brooks - Rosliston / Lichfield classes



Mark & Tracey Brooks

Thanks you Tracey and Mark for your contribution to this month's newsletter, and congratulations for passing your Junior Instructor grading on February 16th.



Tai Chi Instructor Gradings

When I first trained and qualified as a tai chi instructor in the early 90's, like most martial arts clubs it was 'full on' fight for your grade. When I achieved my 3rd Duan I even dislocated my knee wrestling. That was some 30+ years ago and along with our syllabus development our grading system/method has evolved.

In more recent years we have been running monthly Sunday advanced training session which also acts as the main continual assessment method for instructors. The Kai Ming Association syllabus is listed on our website for those interested in finding out more.

Grading February 16th 2025

This year I arranged for a grading in February, and another in November for those due to regrade. February saw Josie Upson, Steve Taylor, Chris Gillie, Tony Rose, Tracey Brooks, Mark Brooks, and Steve Savage grade.

Tracey Brooks, Mark Brooks, and Steve Savage from Heather classes all took their Junior Instructor and passed successfully. Tracey and Mark wrote the article, above, discussing their journey as students.

Josie Upson and Chris Gillie regraded and maintained their instructor status.

Steve Taylor was awarded an honorary grade of Senior Instructor for his years of dedication and commitment to Kai Ming.

Tony Rose has an extensive background in martial arts and achieved Senior Instructor grade despite currently recovering from an injury.

Congratulations to everyone.



Chris Gillie



Josie Upson



Chris and Mark in action as Tracey and Mark look on



Tracey and Sarah give a new take on the tai chi dance.



Steve Savage



Steve Taylor



Tony Rose

Silent Beauty

Quiet Corner

We all have a time when our life seemed perfect; mine was in our second house that we loved.

The snow falls softly in my garden as it covers the ground like a carpet of peace
 My world is safe in this magical place, even the birds are quiet, the traffic noise stilled
 A great silence falls as the crystal flakes touch the earth
 I feel the air is cold and clear, everything cleansed and fresh
 A new beginning

When I need calm, and to feel the people and things I have loved in my life around me still, I close my eyes and I am back in my conservatory watching the snow fall with my old mom and her 'medicinal brandy' laden tea and all my faithful old dogs at my feet and for a while; all's right with the world again.

So just press your 'pause button', maybe put on your favorite music, sit back, close your eyes and think of your special time and place and be happy all over again.

Breathe in that deep sense of peace and relaxation as you breathe out the stresses of the day.

Allow your mind to wander, as mine does through the flakes of snow, and let each element both calm and recharge you in ways that maybe you had forgotten, only because you rarely give yourself the time to reflect in such a peaceful way.

Or you could just do Tai Chi !

- by Jenny Peters

The Bubble Waffles were back !

It's that time of year again - celebrations taking place worldwide for the beginning of the Chinese New Year, and Lichfield is no exception. 2025 is the Year of the Wood Snake which began on 29th January and will finish on 16th February 2026.

I was asked if we could assist in the Celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year event hosted by local Councillors in the Lichfield Guildhall for the large Hong Kong community who have come to live in the Lichfield area. This is a free event specifically for the Chinese and Hong Kong communities, but open to everyone.



So on 1st February 2025, resplendent in their 'red and black' the twenty five strong Kai Ming Display Team, supported by Painting the Rainbow students heavily disguised as members of the public, braved the February temperatures, and at 12 noon stepped out onto the cobbles and pavement slabbing in front of the imposing frontage of the Lichfield Guildhall. Their initial task - to 'Open' the proceedings and by their presence and actions encourage members of the public to stop what they had planned to do, and venture upstairs to the celebratory activities.

Last year when we did this it was quite a daunting process - addressing the unsuspecting local shoppers and sightseers going about their Saturday afternoon, some aimlessly mooching around the shops, others in a headlong dash from one street to another, shopping trolleys and pushchairs at the ready, interspersed with dogs on leads - individuals, family groups, and larger groups all totally unaware of what was about to be put before them.

This year - yes, there were the shoppers and sightseers, some mooching, some on a mission - but this year it was different ! This year the Kai Ming Display Team were introduced by the Official Lichfield Town Crier - equally resplendent in his red and black regalia, but his outfit was adorned by gold braid - and he had a bell.... a very loud bell heralding his announcement in his very loud voice ! Yes - he certainly stopped the crowd, setting the scene, and introducing us.

Then, on cue, Kai Ming began their Display - a general 'warm up' while the Town Crier was in full voice, followed by Qigongs and the Cheng Man Ching 37 Step Form.

Onlookers who knew some of the participants commented later on how 'professional' the Team looked, coming together into formation, and synchronising their movements throughout apparently effortlessly !

Twenty minutes later we were able to relax in readiness for our indoor Display and a second outdoor one to come.

This year the main activity was upstairs in the much larger Guildhall itself. This was the second year for the event, and, building on last year's experiences, this year the organisers had expanded what was on offer.



The Guildhall was full of people all thoroughly enjoying their experience. There were numerous tables set out around the large Hall - encouraging everyone to 'have a go' ! In addition to information about activities on offer in the Lichfield area - including details of Kai Ming and Painting the Rainbow classes, there were plenty of activities for both adults and children Learn how to say certain words and phrases in Mandarin, try to write some of them, write your own name, learn the skill of paper cutting, fold paper and make a movable snake..... cups of tea - and Bubble Waffles ! Yes - the scrumptious Bubble Waffles were back !

It was amazing to see the number of people whose culture it was taking part under instruction just the same as the rest of us - and others, already proficient, taking part just for the love of it and the experience, the emotion, the joy on their faces plain to see.



The Guildhall is a beautiful building. The original was built around 1397, with the dungeon and cells added in 1553. The Guildhall itself had to be rebuilt in the 1700s, and the main Guildhall refurbished again around 1848. In each of its 'makeovers', however, the 'mediaeval' atmosphere has been maintained. The wooden panelling around the walls, and the rows of heraldic Standards on gilded poles hanging beneath the high pitched hammer beamed roof, with, as a 'back-drop', the magnificent stained glass window that had begun its life in Lichfield Cathedral, make it an imposing venue in which to perform. An experience few ever forget and 'perform' we did !

Again on cue, an hour into the proceedings the Display Team regrouped, once more supported by Painting the Rainbow folk. Some of its members had changed, some leaving, some joining - but as before, all were in position and performed the various Qigongs and weapon displays as one. This indoor display had no Town Crier for introduction - this time we had to do everything ourselves - interrupting the flow of the activities to explain our programme.

The added difference was that we were 'on the stage' with our audience able to see us along the full length of the Hall. Once again a daunting task - but we did it !

Qigongs, inviting the audience to join in, with some even brave enough to join us on stage, followed by displays of the Short Fan Form, the Thirteen Sword Secrets using the Straight Sword, and the Broadsword - and concluding with another Qigong for audience participation.

Although we were very much 'in the spotlight' it was all a very enjoyable experience - and we had a trick up our sleeves. The Guildhall is noted for its superb acoustics. Indeed it is regularly used as a venue for musical concerts of all types, drama, and various civic traditions.

Knowing this - to wake up the room we performed the 'Gathering the Clouds to clear the Skies' and 'Waking the Gods and Vibrating the Chi' from the 'Heaven's Breath' Qigong. Each participant timed their breathing perfectly - their breath coming up through and out - movements were completely synchronised. The volume, assisted by the acoustics, was impressive ! The effect was spectacular ! The response from the audience was amazing - a couple dropped what they were holding, and some even squealed ! Some people out on the street heard it and came up to discover what was going on !

Kai Ming and PtR had certainly made their mark on the event !

Our afternoon concluded with another Display outside performed an hour later. This time not only were we 'introduced' by the Town Crier but in the interim we had persuaded him to join us in a Qigong ! The whole performance was hilarious - enjoyed by all participants and onlookers alike. His amusing verbal and physical responses as he struggled to master his balance, co-ordination and breathing as we progressed through the various movements in the sequence, all added to the entertainment.



This was added to when, halfway through Shibashi - Set 1, one of our Painting the Rainbow students joined us straight from a family lunch celebrating her birthday - and she was serenaded by the Town Crier, his bell, and the rest of us singing 'Happy Birthday' !

Or efforts were very much appreciated by the Organisers, and very well received by the audience of over 500 people who had attended the event during the afternoon.

I am indebted to the Team - all the Kai Ming and Painting the Rainbow students who gave their time on that Saturday afternoon - forty three braved the elements, that thankfully stayed fine. Many of them brought their families - providing us with a back-up support. The smiles on the faces of audience and performers alike proved the enjoyment to be mutual. All of us came away with lasting memories of our personal achievements. There were also those who had wished to take part but for various reasons were unable to join us on the day - our numbers would have topped fifty ! A massive response - and one for which I am truly grateful. Thank you everyone !

Reflecting on the event, I was struck by the family atmosphere that existed throughout. Family groups, with small children dressed

in their traditionally 'new outfits' and laughing - lots of laughing ! The Chinese focus at this time of year is 'The family' - and this year the Organisers seemed to have got it just right ! Groups were moving along the tables, taking part in activities steeped in their family culture and traditions, thoroughly enjoying themselves. This enjoyment was brought to the reception and appreciation given to our Displays, both inside and out. Yet again I was made very aware that what we were performing was very familiar to many of our audience - and just how important what we were doing was to them. They saw it as a massive sign of respect on our part - a respect for their culture and traditions. Many thanked me in the interim periods between the Displays.



To be asked to take part in an event such as this gives one a good feeling - to discover that we were to be the only 'display' made it an honour.

Such an event is not just a twenty or thirty minute spectacle watched by passers-by at a fete, or in a park. Those audiences find it interesting and appreciate what they see at the time. Whatever the event those of us taking part make every effort to demonstrate our very best skills but in an event such as the celebration of the Chinese New Year that means so much to the Chinese people - then we know that many of them watch with knowledge and understanding of the various Qigong and CMC movements and sequences. We know that for the majority the interest and appreciation will remain with them after the event. Our efforts matter - our accuracy is noted.

This makes one realise the responsibility we have, as Instructors, to get it right. To teach our students correctly - so they are not left exposed by performing some diluted attempt at a Form or Qigong to audiences who may 'know'. We owe it to our students whether or not they are going to 'perform', or just learn for themselves - we owe them that they are learning what they signed up for and trusted us to provide - and we owe it to the history of Tai Chi Chuan.

Given the hundreds of years many of the Tai Chi Forms have been practised in the villages, religiously protected and passed down through the generations - those of us in the West have only relatively recently been entrusted to continue these skills and to introduce this legacy - this knowledge and awareness - to western students.

Those of us who 'choose' to take our studies of the art further and become Instructors to whatever level we wish to extend ourselves - do so by choice. We 'choose' to take on this responsibility to maintain the legacy, to accurately interpret the lessons taught by those who wrote The Classics, and to embrace the extensions of these made by the various Grand Masters since. No-one asks us to. With the level of choice one takes the ticket - the ticket of 'responsibility'. For this one gets a badge - of Integrity. We need to ensure we wear it well.

by Heather Lomas, Lichfield Chief Instructor