

## Congratulations

There are a number of reasons for this special edition. First and foremost is to congratulate the members of the Zhong Ding National Team, the Lao Hu or Tigers, for their success at the British Open in Oxford. The seven members of the team won seven medals between them, and it is fair to say that every single member of the team truly distinguished themselves and did Zhong Ding proud. Their success is due not only to the hard work and determination of the team members but also to the dedication and generosity of the coaches and their assistants. Don Harradine, Ken Mead and Graham Ball have all devoted themselves to ensuring the team have all the training and support they need. The tigers themselves, captained by Chris Sims have all made sacrifices to improve their skills. So, well done Chris, Jan Simpson, Sam Casey, Suzie Tsoi, Michael Crane, Marc Burton and Vinnie Leo.



I also trust that you will all join me in wishing them further success in their next competition.

The second reason for this special edition of the newsletter is to extend a warm invitation to all members and their friends and families to attend the third master Liang He Qing Invitational Championships in Nottingham, the first weekend of July. It is my firm hope that representatives from all Zhong Ding areas will be there to compete, meet old friends and make new ones. As with previous events on Saturday there will be a series of seminars given by Zhong Ding senior instructors, with the competition taking place on the Sunday.



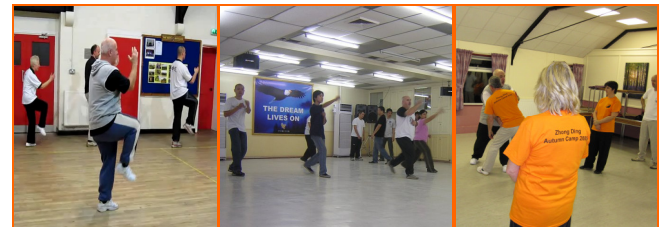
At the end of July, on the very last weekend the Fourth Cheng Man Ching Forum is being held in Southern France. I shall be teaching there along with Fong and it is to be hoped that a sizeable Zhong Ding contingent will attend to take part in both the seminars and the competition. Teams from Malaysia, Taiwan and many European countries will be participating (<http://www.tai-chi-forum.yoga-destination.com/>).

As you will read in this edition of the newsletter we have just completed the first International Instructor camp at Zhong Ding

headquarters here on Penang Island. I hope that this will be the first of such events to be held on an annual basis.



Throughout the month of July I will be travelling around the UK so look out for courses in your area. I hope to see you then.



Nigel Sutton 2010

## San Bao Zhong Ding 3 Treasures Tai Chi Forest Festival 2010

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010- Sun 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010

San Bao Zhong Ding will be hosting this Tai Chi Festival in the New Forest near Brockenhurst. Topics covered will suit beginners to advanced.

Teachers attending will include:

- Andy Norman
- Dean Dalrymple
- Daan Hengst – Holland
- Nigel Swan
- Anthony Ulatowski



*"I hope that as many people as possible will attend this event, hosted by Master Instructor Tony Ulatowski. Tony has been training and teaching on the Instructor Training Course and has a great deal to offer. He will be joined by other experienced Taiji instructors and I have no doubt an excellent time will be had by all."*

Nigel Sutton

More details can be requested by emailing:

[forest.festival@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:forest.festival@yahoo.co.uk)

## Zhong Ding Applied Taijiquan Instructor Training Course Malaysia 2010

For the first three weeks in April instructors and students from the UK and Malaysia gathered at the Kuala Sungai Pinang headquarters of Zhong Ding International to deepen their understanding of taijiquan and related arts.

During the time they spent in Malaysia course participants focused on the philosophical principles and theory of Heaven, Earth and Man and how this related to body method in taijiquan. The chosen focus in weapons training was the four foot stick, which serves to magnify and emphasise the body's use of and reaction to force.

Shortly after the course participants had all arrived and settled in, the Association's first Zhong Dao Jie, or Memorial Day Celebration was held. On this day of dedicated training culminating in a simple yet meaningful ceremony, the lives of former Masters and Students of the Association who have passed away, are remembered and celebrated. During the days training Master Instructor Tony Ulatowski from London and Junior Instructor Naomi Thomas from Sussex, completed 100 repetitions of Master Liang's fast form. Other participants performed stick, empty hand and assorted bladed weapons forms to commemorate the lives and contribution of their late seniors. Remembered on this day were Masters Liang He Qing, Zhong Cheng Li, Ian Cassettari, Phil Longhurst, David Rodriguez and Peter Harris.



After a week's intensive training, with participants often working for eight to ten hours a day, it was off to Master Wong Jing Hui's North South Shaolin Temple to test pushing hands skills against a range of Malaysian opponents. During the evening of fun and hard work that ensued the Zhong Ding party acquitted themselves well against both skilled and experienced opponents. Even the youngest "veteran" of the party, David Preston, at a sprightly 71, gave Master Wong a run for his money in the pushing hands arena.



During the next week course participants focused on their chosen areas of individual study, which ranged from the Zhengzi 37 posture form to the Liang style long form, the fast form and Sanfeng sword, as well as continuing their research into both pushing hands and application



In the final week of the course participants prepared for their final grading examinations. These were held at the Centre with both Malaysian and British Grading examiners sitting on the grading panel. Naomi Thomas successfully completed her second duan full instructor examination, while Peter Redhead and David Preston both successfully passed their 1st degree Junior instructors certification in the Taijiquan for Therapeutic Purposes programme. Neil Bothwell from Northeast Zhong Ding (UK) did a sterling job of preparing the latter two for their grading while Roddy MacGlashan, John Marsh and Tony Ulatowski all played their part in preparing Naomi for her second duan.

Throughout the course all of the participants played a significant role in helping each other to achieve their training goals and to cope with the difficulties of communal living in an unfamiliar environment. During the course the island of Penang sweltered in a heatwave which saw temperatures in the training hall in the high thirties (Celsius).

The training course ended with a visit to Kuala Lumpur where the participants met Master Koh Ah Tee and enjoyed an evening question and answer session. It was not all talk, however, for Master Koh took the opportunity to demonstrate his "backbreaking" fa jing". Neil Bothwell, Pete Redhead and John Marsh all found themselves hurtling into the wall and their looks of shock, astonishment and not a little pain, were truly a picture to behold. Master Koh was at pains to point out that he was only using a fraction of his power as he didn't want to hurt anyone.

Neil, as resident "karate sensei", was keen to test Master Koh's internal strength and despite his best efforts, thundering blows and resounding kiais, he didn't manage to make much of an impression on the ever-calm Master.

Finally Master Koh treated his appreciative audience to a demonstration of the first section of the Zhengzi tai chi form as he now practises it. This was sufficient to give the whole group food for thought.

With demonstrations for the evening over it was time to retire to a local restaurant where the festivities continued on into the night.



The next two days were spent training with Master Azlan Ghanie in his Senaman Tua and Silat Melayu Keris Lok Sembilan, giving the participants an insight into an art other than their own and also giving them the opportunity to experience the graceful yet deadly arts of the Malay people.

All of the course participants expressed their awe at the grace and painful, yet seemingly gentle, efficacy of Guru Azlan's skills.

Annual instructor Training Courses in Malaysia are now being planned to give an opportunity for instructors and potential instructors to enjoy the Malaysian training experience as well as to deepen their understanding so as to better equip them to teach the art in their own countries.

By training in the country where Applied Taijiquan has its roots instructors are better enabled to understand the inextricable links between the host culture and the art. In seeing that taijiquan and the asian martial arts are an everyday and normal part of people's lives, instructors are better able to pass on their art in such a way that their own students are able to make the seemingly exotic a part of their normal routines. In addition by understanding something of the cultural background of the arts, light is shed on many areas of the art which may before have seemed mysterious or inaccessible. Furthermore by having the opportunity to focus solely and intensively on their chosen art for a period of time, to put everyday life "on hold", course participants are able to examine their training to depths that they may not be able to explore in their home environment. In rising to the challenges presented by such an exploration of the art that this "total-immersion" presents, participants often find that they have to confront aspects of their character and behaviour which they don't often have to come to terms with in everyday life. Through this process they grow not only as practitioners and teachers of the art but also as human beings.



It has been more than a year since I last met Master Koh Ah Tee, and, as I was visiting Kuala Lumpur and he was free, we arranged to get together. I have known Master Koh now for nearly two decades, having first been introduced by our mutual martial arts brother Master Wu Chiang Hsing. Over the years I have seen his art mature and grow and his skill level rise ever higher and higher. Master Koh and I are both disciples of Masters Tan Ching Ngee and Lau Kim Hong, and Master Koh is also a disciple of Taiwan's Wu Guo Zhong. Throughout his martial arts journey Master Koh has been driven by a burning desire to get to the heart of the skills of Grandmaster Zheng Man Qing. This is what prompted him to gain initiation with three teachers, all from the same lineage, but with different levels of connection to the Grandmaster himself. Now Master Koh would be the first to admit that the path he now treads is one that is guided by his own experience and research.



Once the small talk was over and we had caught up with each other's family news it was time to ask him some of the questions that my own training and research had thrown up. His answers were, as always, direct and devoid of artifice or political "spin".

When I initially asked him whether he was working on anything new, he gave me a hard look and pointed out that we had known each other for a long time and that during all that time his approach to his art and his goals and aspirations had remained the same. These I knew full well were to get to the essence of Grandmaster Zheng's art that is to truly understand and be able to embody the philosophy and theory of taiji and its constant interchange of Yin and Yang.

"I am still walking the same path," he explained. "My words now and the words you recorded in both the books you have written are the same."

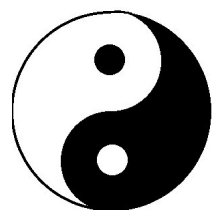
Realising that to follow this path of questioning would not prove fruitful I decided to change tack and get more specific about aspects of the art I had been working on, a tactic which resulted in the following interview:

**NS: So which do you consider more important, moving or fixed step pushing hands?**

KAT: I consider fixed step to be more important; firstly because it enables students to concentrate on the movement pattern of the body without having to worry about moving the legs; secondly because, in actual application of the art in self-defence, we have to think of the gravest extreme. What if you are cornered and have nowhere to move to? This is when fixed step work comes into its own.



**NS: In practicing both form and pushing hands some teachers emphasise the yin-yang cross connection whereby the hand opposite to the load-bearing leg is the one that does the work, in terms of application. What is your opinion of this emphasis?**



KAT: As you know, I have always taken the position that this is not that important a matter. If you look at the taiji diagram you see that the balance of yin in relation to yang, and vice-versa, is always changing. There are points in the form where the yin-yang cross connection is not applicable. There is no need to focus on this; instead you should concentrate on whether your form is correct or not.

**NS: How do we know whether our form is correct? Surely we should just copy the teacher?**

KAT: NO! Most definitely no. It is because millions of tai chi students just copy their teacher, that there are so few true tai chi adepts in the world. Everybody is different, not just physically but also mentally. Everybody has their own tai chi. Instead of just copying we should be constantly trying to measure ourselves as to whether our movements meet the requirements of the taiji.

**NS: How exactly do we measure ourselves?**

KAT: This is done by adjusting our bodies so that throughout our practise of the form there is no feeling of strength, force or weight anywhere. This is not easy.

**NS: What about "sinking"? Isn't this a matter of lowering the body, bending the knees more**

KAT: No it isn't. It is a function of "song", of alert relaxation, whereby there is an opening up of the body. The posture doesn't necessarily become lower or more crouched. As we gain more and more experience in tai chi we find that our stances are becoming smaller, indeed all of the movements become smaller. The circles become smaller and more internal.



**NS: To move on to another matter, what connection is there, if any, between the two person san shou form and the usage and application of tai chi as a fighting art?**

KAT: None whatsoever, certainly not as far as the tai chi skills I am seeking to develop are concerned. To be completely honest the teaching of san shou A, B and the two-person forms are a convenient way for the teacher to extend his syllabus, to have more to teach the students. You could say they are useful financially. No, the essence of tai chi is simplicity. As human beings we are always searching for more, always seeking to accumulate; but the real essence of tai chi lies not in accumulation but in simplification. If you wish to improve your tai chi then concentrate on form and pushing hands. That's all.

**NS: What about auxiliary qigong exercises such as the nine circulations? Do you practise them?**

KAT: No I don't. I believe they are emphasized most by Wu Guo Zhong. I don't know how much importance Grandmaster Zheng placed on them. I don't practise them because they seem to rely too much on intangibles. We can imagine the qi moving here or there but does it really? When I practise my form I can feel the qi accumulating in the dantian, that is enough for me.

Concentrate on form and pushing hands, get to the essence, trust yourself and follow the path.

**NS: Master Koh thank you for your time.**

Nigel Sutton 2010

**Master Liang He Qing Championship 2010  
Sunday 4th July**

Nigel Sutton will be hosting the annual Master Liang He Qing Championship at Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Campus, Nottingham, NG11 8NS on Sunday 4th July 2010.

Events include:

- Empty Hand Forms (internal and external)
- Weapon Forms (internal and external)
- Pushing hands (moving step only)
- Weapons sparring (short and long weapons)
- Silat Cerita



Application forms for the events can be downloaded from the Zhong Ding website at:

<http://www.zhong-ding.com/eventsuk.htm>