



## Newsletter December 2007

### A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to All!

Let me wish seasons greetings to all of you and apologise for the late publication of this newsletter. The family and I are now back in Malaysia and just about struggling out of the mists of jet-lag.

First of all I must thank all of you for making my recent visit such a great success. The trip which saw visits to Devon, London, East Midlands, Sussex, York and Manchester culminated in Guru Zainal Abidin's brief visit to the UK and the Master Liang He Qing Memorial Championships. This event was held on December 1st and served as a Zhong Ding "gathering of the clan" with teams and representatives from Devon, Sussex, London, Somerset, East Midlands, Huddersfield, York, Doncaster, Barnsley and international representatives from the US and the Republic of Ireland.

The event not only included all the regular taijiquan events but also featured a silat competition, a weapons sparring event and demonstrations of a number of Master Liang's favourite forms.

Amongst the guests and dignitaries attending and officiating were Guru Zainal Abidin, Guru Chris Parker, Steve Johnson Shifu, Andy Norman Shifu, John Gardiner Shifu and Margaret and Aileen Cassettari, the widow and daughter of the late Ian Cassettari Shifu.

At the beginning of the day I gave a short address reminding both audience and participants of why we were there, namely to celebrate the life and example not only of Master Liang but also of our other departed seniors and brothers, Master Zhong Cheng Li, Master Ian Cassettari and Master David Rodriguez. I also stressed my hope that all of the competitors would show a martial spirit that would make Master Liang proud.

What followed surpassed all of my hopes and expectations as everyone taking part showed not only courage and a sense of fairplay but also humour and self-discipline. It was not uncommon for competitors who had just been scored on to congratulate their opponent and many friendships were made, renewed and cemented as the days events unfolded.

After an initial demonstration by myself (Zha Shi Chui Xingyiquan), Tan Hui Min Sutton (Gong Li Quan) and Tan Mew Hong (Da Mo Jian), Guru Zainal Abidin officially declared the competition open.

As well as the Zhong Ding teams (Sussex, London, York, East Midlands) Andy Norman Shifu's Barnsley club took part as did a team from Guru Chris Parker's Silat Fitrah group.

As the events progressed it was clear that a new kind of pushing hands was emerging with fast-paced jockeying for position starting the encounters, dynamic throws and sweeps taking place as opportunities arose and strength, stamina and skill all being evident in equal measure.

All of the competitors showed great spirit but worthy of particular mention were Jon Tatley of Silat Fitrah taking part in his first pushing hands competition, David Henstock whose throwing prowess won him a gold medal, the epic battlers Junior Mead and Paul Gitsham and last but not least Steve White who was the "most senior" participant and acquitted himself extremely well against opponents young enough to be his children!

Halfway through the day Gerry Kennedy (Zhong Ding Ireland), Mike Roberts (Zhong Ding USA) and Mike Woodruff (Zhong Ding London) performed demonstrations that made me proud and would have made Master Liang quietly smile with pleasure. Gerry performed a masterful rendition of Master Liang's happy and relaxed walking stick, while Mike Roberts and Mike Woodruff respectively demonstrated the Wulang

Bagua Staff and the Monkey staff of Master Liang's beloved Hongquan. The atmosphere in the hall could have been cut with a knife and their performances prompted loud and heartfelt applause.

In the afternoon, as the final rounds of the empty hand form (internal and external) were completed and the weapons forms performances came to an end, it was time for the Silat Cerita competition. I think it is fair to say that this was the very first time that such an event had been held in the UK. Competitors are given a story which they have to turn into a kind of freestyle form. Some very entertaining performances followed, including Jon Tatley's "am-dram" spectacular. The Sutton family was represented by both Lian and Fong and the audience were treated to an entertainment they won't forget for a while. In the end Vinnie of Silat Fitrah won the Gold with the judges deciding to award two silvers to Silat Fitrah's Kim and Fong.

The last event of the day was the weapons sparring competition which proved very exciting. Steve White as armourer was kept busy repairing the weapons as they splintered, fractured and even exploded – this not due so much to defects in the weapons as to the degree of seriousness with which they were handled.

The judging was handled by four corner judges who recorded scored points with clickers while the final decisions relating to efficacy of blows and "sudden death" was ably handled by the Judging panel of Guru Zainal Abidin and Guru Chris Parker.

The final demonstrations of the day was masterfully performed by Andy Norman Shifu who gracefully executed the 42 step Combined Form.

As well as the medal awards there were two special presentations to make; one was of the annual Ian Cassettari Shifu Spirit Award, which this year was awarded to Chris Sims from Sussex Zhong Ding, while the other was the newly instituted Master Liang He Qing award given to the student who most exemplified his spirit of openness to all martial arts and this was awarded to Paul Gitsham of York Zhong Ding. In addition Ian Sinclair who was awarded the Ian Cassettari trophy last year was belatedly presented with his award of a ceremonial sword.

After the awards ceremony all of the participants and officials gathered in the centre of the area facing Master Liang's photo and performed a mighty Hen Ha, repeating the ritual three times rising to a crescendo of sound that truly represented the pride and spirit of all those honouring the Master by taking part in this event.

My feeling at the end of the day was one of great pride and love for the Zhong Ding family. All of those who traveled hundreds if not thousands of miles to share their love and respect for Master Liang He Qing exemplified all that is truly special about Zhong Ding.

All of the participants showed great martial spirit and for all of them, I am certain, the competition was both a joy and a learning experience.

Finally I must extend my thanks and gratitude to all of those people without who the day would not have been the success that it was including Don and Carol Harradine, Miles Craig, Mario and Ting Wiznycia, Brian Woodruff, Bob and Florence (well couldn't mention Bob without the power behind the throne!), John Gardiner, Betty Sutherland Shifu, Steve White, Chris and May Sims and all the participants.

Thank you and a mighty HEN HA to you all.

## 20th Anniversary Celebrations

As you will undoubtedly be aware next year is Zhong Ding's twentieth Anniversary and a whole programme of celebrations are planned including hopefully a camp in Ireland and an Intensive Training course in Sussex. In addition there are two major international events, the first in May being the 100th Anniversary of the birth of my Shigong Gao Ziyang of the Beijing Gaoshi Bagauzhang Association. The second event is our twentieth anniversary bash in Penang in September. This event features a whole smorgasbord of world class masters and is not to be missed.

It is essential for the latter two events that I have advance booking so please if you are planning on coming e-mail me at [ncs8@tm.net.my](mailto:ncs8@tm.net.my) stating how many of you will be attending. Thank you.

And now because Xmas is approaching fast I will close here but I will be back with more in the early New Year.

Seasons Greetings and Happy Training

Nigel

Copyright N Sutton 2007