

Newsletter Jan/Feb 1998

Welcome...

To the Zhong Ding national newsletter, a new quarterly publication that will keep members informed of all the latest news from the Zhong Ding Traditional Chinese Martial Arts Association.

1998 marks the tenth anniversary of the founding of Zhong Ding by our chief instructor, Nigel Sutton. Since then, ZD has grown from a small group of friends practicing Taijiquan in a cold sports hall in west London, to an organisation of over 200 members with classes around the UK and overseas (though the cold sports hall experience is something many of us still have to endure!).

This year, the Chinese "Year of the Tiger", we will be staging a number of activities to celebrate our first decade of success. I hope many of you will join in the celebrations and not only have fun but also improve your T'ai-chi skills and knowledge.

ZD was founded to bring the best quality Taijiquan tuition to the public. This guiding principle still lies at the core of everything we do and I'm sure it will remain the focus of our efforts as we enter our tenth anniversary year.

Here's to the next ten years!

John Gardiner

Chairman, Zhong Ding

The Spirit of Zhong Ding

By Nigel Sutton, Chief Instructor

This year, as you should all know by now, is the tenth anniversary of the founding of our Association. From humble beginnings in a school gymnasium in West London, Zhong Ding has spread across England, into Wales and also out into Europe. Over the last decade it can be fairly stated that Zhong Ding instructors have taught thousands of students. Furthermore many of the people attending courses have been instructors from different martial arts groups and have gone on to spread aspects of the art they have learnt from us in their own clubs and classes (not always, unfortunately, acknowledging from where they learnt!)

The first class that we started had twelve beginner students and only one was left at the end of the initial course, Ben Clarke. During the first five years on average our students in class numbered between five and twelve, although on one notable occasion in the summer twenty seven people turned up.

Out of that original club (and the adult education classes that we also taught) Ben, John Gardiner (who had helped to teach the first beginners' group) and Dave Spencer are still active in taijiquan. During the latter part of those early years I began to teach seminars that were open to instructors from different associations. We soon began to be joined by other clubs that liked what we were doing and wanted to be a part of it.

Thus we "collected" John Fowler and his band of West Country warriors; Vinnie Jones and his Celtic clansmen (of both the northern and western variety); John Higginson and his Lancashire lads and lasses; Steve Johnson and the martial Midlanders; and finally, albeit in an off and on sort of fashion, Rob Wesley and the Birmingham braves.

Outside the UK, we also have Jamie Dibdin and Giles Busk in Germany and John Higginson is busy making friends in Spain. In France, ZD has strong links with our sister Association, Le Meridien, with the inimitable Bill Nelson at the helm.

Zhong Ding has therefore come a long way in a comparatively short space of time and I believe we have laid the foundations for a successful future.

We established Zhong Ding with its prime aim being to provide to others the opportunities, enjoyment and experiences I myself have enjoyed during the course of my martial arts career to date. I wanted everybody who had an interest in the art to be able to study with my teachers and, wherever possible, to be able to travel to the Far East to see the art practised in its native setting.

During the last ten years we have sent teams to Taiwan to take part in international events; have had association members participate in competitions in Europe, Asia and America; students and teachers have attended international courses and events all over the world; and we have ourselves sponsored and run courses for many teachers both from the UK and from Asia.

Master Tan Ching Ngee has visited the UK three times under the auspices of Zhong Ding and recently returned to the UK at the invitation of ex-Association member Mark Peters. Master Lau Kim Hong has taught in the UK twice, Master Liang He Qing, Master Tan Swoh Theng, Master Wu Chiang Hsing and Master Fu Chang Hui have all also made successful and enjoyable visits.

But more importantly, Zhong Ding instructors up and down the country have all played their part in teaching authentic taijiquan of a high technical standard to all who came to learn.

This brings me to the title of this article - the Spirit of Zhong Ding. For it is the spirit of Zhong Ding that the art we all love should be made available to all who want to learn it without unnecessary mystification, window-dressing or ego gratification.

Although we have had our ups and downs we are still here and people are still making progress. The standard of our martial arts, both in terms of teachers and students, is high. Our instructors are comparable and in many ways superior to many teaching in Southeast Asia and even in China. I have yet to be ashamed of the standard of any Zhong Ding student who came out to visit Malaysia.

Indeed my masters are now so used to our standard that they can spot non-Association members when they come out to Malaysia to train.

Lest you think this is all big talk on my part, I recently returned from a stay with my shixiong (elder brother), Master Koh Ah Tee, and he waxed lyrical about the standard of the Zhong Ding students he had met. He was particularly impressed with Ian Cassettari's vertical break-falling skills and Glen Pelham-Mather's hair!

But, seriously, congratulations are in order to all our students and instructors. The only reason this Association exists is to give all of us the chance to meet and train with like-minded people and to continue to make progress on The Inner Way (copies still available from all good Association instructors!)

The Spirit of Zhong Ding then is one of enjoying our art, making new friends all over the world, and ensuring that the standard of taijiquan wherever there are Zhong Ding members continues to improve.

I hope to see all of you at some time this year (I hope to be in the UK in March and June) and especially look forward to greeting those of you who will be coming out to Malaysia in September for the tenth ZD anniversary celebrations

Wishing you all Gong Xi Fa Cai for the Chinese New Year

Nigel Sutton

Chief Instructor, Zhong Ding

News Flash! Nigel and Master Liang in Europe Feb./Mar.

Nigel has managed to organize some free time and will now be in Europe for just over a month from the 19 February.

He will be accompanied by Master Liang He Qing, one of Zhong Ding's leading technical advisers from Malaysia.

Nigel and Master Liang aim to visit a number of regular classes in the UK and in Germany. Nigel is also running a number of weekend courses. These include the following:

- 21 February: Instructors' training in London. Call Brian on 0181-841 1054 for details.
- 22 February: Peter Phipps is hosting Nigel in East Sussex. Call Peter on (01892) 783639.
- 28 Feb/1 Mar: Nigel will be with John Higginson in Manchester. Phone Higgs on 0161-860 4111 for more info.
- 7/8 March: Advanced students and instructors' course (plus technical panel and executive committee meeting) in Birmingham. Higgs will have details on the venue but instructors should send to John Gardiner any issues they would like to raise at the meeting.
- 13-15 March: Nigel is giving an evening lecture on learning martial arts in a Chinese cultural context to members at Zhong Ding in Germany. This will be followed by a weekend seminar. Call Giles Busk on 0049+408 500 311.
- 21/22 March: Nigel will be teaching in Devon over this weekend. Call John Fowler on (01803) 613267.

Nigel will be focussing on the form and its function in terms of martial applications, including Chin Na seizing. However, he will also spend time on form work, meditation and Qigong, if required.

Master Liang is also available for tuition, either for classes or individuals, and would like to concentrate on staff and Chin Na. For further details, please call John Gardiner on 0181-567 1088.

10th ZD anniversary fun in

Malaysia

The tenth anniversary Zhong Ding "Train With The Masters" tour is to be staged from the 3-18 September in Malaysia.

This promises to be a unique opportunity to train with many of ZD's leading technical advisers and masters, including Masters Lau Kim Hong, Liang He Qing, Tan Swoh Theng and Wu Chiang Hsiang and Nigel himself.

Daily training will take place in a Daoist temple, with auxiliary training in meditation and Qigong tuition available in one of the numerous Buddhist temples.

"Train With The Masters" includes 15 nights accommodation in a comfortable, fully air-conditioned hotel in Batu Pahat, all training costs, transport from and to Kuala Lumpur, plus free tickets to the spectacular tenth anniversary banquet and celebrations.

Cost per person, based on two sharing a room, are: £700 for non-members, £650 for ZD members, £550 for 1st Duan Assistant Instructors and £500 for 2nd Duan full instructors.

Senior instructors, 3rd Duan and above, price available on application.

If you or your students are interested, do register for the trip at the earliest opportunity as Nigel needs to have a good idea of the number of people to expect by the end of February. Also, be aware that the Commonwealth Games are being staged in Malaysia next summer so flights need to be booked now.

Brian Woodruff in London is helping to organize the tour from the UK, so if you want to find out more give him a call on 0181-841 1054.

Also, please note that Nigel asks if those going to Malaysia can give him a £100 deposit when he's here in March help secure hotel rooms, taxis, etc.

Broadsword course in "Brum"

The single-edged broadsword is often the first weapon taught in the T'ai-chi weapons syllabus. It teaches the student to take the principles, awareness and energy learnt in the empty hand form and to apply them beyond the limits of one's own body.

The 32-movement Yang broadsword form develops strength and whole body co-ordination, in particular honing the tremendous power made available by efficient use of the waist and rooting.

On the weekend of the 21 and 22 February, John Higginson will be teaching broadsword in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham. The course will include learning the basic movements of the weapon, the training form and 32-movement Yang form, applications and auxiliary equipment exercises to generate a real feeling of how to use the weapon.

Cost for these two days of intensive training is £45 for ZD members (£55 for non-members), or £25 members and £30 non-members per day.

For further details contact Bob Wesley on 0121-344 3679.

Tony Skito seminar in west London

Tony Ulatowski from the London area is running a one-day seminar on Sunday, 1 March on the subject of Peng, Lu, Ji and An (aren't they a Chinese rock group!?).

Venue is The Avenue Centre, Normansfield Avenue, Teddington, Middlesex. Cost is £25 for non-members and £20 for ZD members, with a further £5 reduction if you book ahead of the seminar. Time is 9:30am to 4pm.

"Skito" will be discussing Peng, Lu, Ghi and An in relation to the form, partner work, Qigong and other aspects of Taijiquan.

Tony puts a lot of effort into his teaching, so this seminar promises to be an informative event.

Call Tony on 0181-755 0285 to confirm your place.

Lancaster training weekend in March

The Lancaster University Taijiquan Club, affiliated to ZD, is holding a training weekend on the the 7 and 8 March.

On the Saturday, John Higginson will be going in great detail through the 37-movement Cheng Man-ch'ing. This will be of interest to both beginners and advanced students alike.

Sunday morning training involves multi-style pushing hands training with various local instructors, while the afternoon will feature a good period of time for a general pushing hands session.

Times for both days are 10am until 5pm. For further information including cost and ZD members discount, contact Cen Kaighin on (01524) 592633.

Spring retreat at Samye Ling

The Samye Ling Tibetan Centre in the Scottish lowlands is the venue for this year's ZD spring T'ai-chi retreat.

The retreat will be held from the evening of Friday, 20 through to the afternoon of Sunday, 22 March. Cost is £65 ZD members (£75 non-members) for the full weekend, or £35 members (£40 non-members) per day.

These costs are for full board and tuition. Double rooms will be £4 a night extra; single rooms an additional £8 per night. Children and families welcome.

The overall pace of the weekend will be steady and relaxed, with the focus being on restoring and maintaining the natural balance between body, mind and spirit.

There will be intensive form practice, sensitivity and awareness training, plus Chi Kung tuition and meditation instruction. The weekend retreat will provide a good, relaxed atmosphere to have plenty of fun while also further improving your T'ai-chi, Chi Kung and meditation skills.

To reserve your place contact John Higginson on 0161-860 4111. A non-refundable deposit of £25 is required and early booking is essential if you want to attend the weekend.

British Open to be held on 5 April

The British Open T'ai-chi ch'uan competition will be held on Sunday, 5 April at Blackbird Road Leisure Centre, Oxford.

The competition includes full contact fighting, competitive pushing hands, plus internal and external forms competitions.

Dan Docherty, one of the great stalwarts of British T'ai-chi, is again organising the competition. In past years, ZD members have entered the competition and won numerous medals in many of the competitive categories.

For more details, call Dan Docherty on 0181-368 6815.

The British Open will be run in conjunction with the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain's Fourth Festival of Chinese Martial Arts.

ZD membership benefits for you

Reading through this edition of the newsletter you could not fail to notice the number of courses and other events that offer reduced prices to ZD members.

But saving you significant amounts of cash is not the only benefit of ZD membership.

For just £15 a year ZD membership provides you with reduced prices for ZD activities, plus membership of the British Council for Chinese Martial Arts and training insurance coverage.

The BCCMA is the only official governing body for Chinese martial arts in the UK recognized by the Sports Council. Membership provides the opportunity to compete in BCCMA-sanctioned or affiliated competitive or training events, such as the British Wushu/Kung Fu Championships and the European Wushu/Kung Fu Championships.

The insurance coverage provided by the BCCMA and which constitutes the bulk of the £15 ZD membership fee gives you peace of mind while you train. Full details of the coverage is available from your instructor.

Just as with our founder-membership of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain, ZD also actively participates in the BCCMA to ensure that our students have the best possible opportunities in terms of training, competitions and official recognition.

So please don't delay. If you are not already an official ZD member, ask your instructor today for an application form.

New Qigong course in west London

Tony Ulatowski is now teaching a lunchtime Qigong course every Wednesday from 12:30pm-1:15pm at St. Mary's Parish Hall, Langham Road, Teddington.

The focus is very much on meditation, gentle stretching and stress relief – and jasmine tea!

For further information give Tony a call on 0181-755 0285.

Master Lau visit

Master Lau Kim Hong, one of Zhong Ding's best known technical advisers, may be returning to the UK later in the year.

The visit will probably be sometime late in September or October. Confirmation and further details should be available in the near future.

And finally ...

Don't forget this is YOUR newsletter. It needs you to provide stories, training tips, event reports and updates to the calendar.

Also, if you have access, do use the ZD web site. It can be reached on:

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/zhong_ding.

If you want to place anything in the newsletter write to me, John Gardiner, at the following address:

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Alternatively, e-mail me at:

JGARDIN2@Ford.com

The next ZD newsletter will be published in May 1998.