

## 合気道

### LAC Koshukai 2007



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In November this year the London Aikido Club held a two-day Koshukai led by Paolo Corallini and Ulf Evenas. Months in the planning, the weekend began for many at 7am on a crisp autumnal morning. Mats were hauled into place in a sports hall in Walthamstow, and large numbers armed with cups of tea mucked in to set up.

People from as far away as France and Cambridge joined the regulars of the London Aikido Club and it was amazing to see such a long line of aikidoka all bowing to the kamiza.

Paolo and Ulf demonstrated a wide and interesting range of aiki-ken, aiki-jo and tai-jutsu techniques throughout the weekend. For new aikidoka a Koshukai can be daunting as we move from one technique to another. I remember not having ever held a jo before my first koshukai. But the experience of training with a range of people from different clubs and countries is a valuable one whatever the level of experience.

The buffet on Saturday night was a

good chance for many who had trained together on the mat to meet without throwing each other on the floor, and to spring a surprise birthday cake on Ulf. And despite the obligatory refreshment we were eager for more on Sunday.

Before, during and after the weekend dozens of people helped carry out numerous, and often unseen jobs, which ensured the whole weekend was a great success for all involved.

**Jo Wheeler**

*Full photos of the Koshukai can be found on the website. On the following pages are some scrapbook collections of photos, some not found on the website. For all those we missed out – sorry, you are not forgotten, you just weren't there at the right moment. There were many behind the scenes helpers which don't grace these pages, in particular those who helped with transport, planning, organising the videoing etc. Thank you to everyone for a fantastic effort, for supporting the event and making it run so smoothly.*

## The Senseis



## Setting Up



*Joe and Matthew working out the layout for the mats*



*Left & below: Variations on mat cleaning technique*



*Jo on the reception desk*



*John also on reception*



## The Aikido



*Yudansha during weapons class*





*"Was it something I said?"*



*Time for a rest*

## The Party



*Party photos by  
Svetoslav Kostadinov*

### Message from Andy...

This event was a great success, bringing together a broad range of Aikidoka for a very good suite of practices which were at once serious and focused, but good humoured, co-operative and generous (as Aikido events ought to be).

I was happy, Senseis Paolo and Ulf were happy, and the participants all seem to have had a good time. These events really are vitally important to maintain the standard of the

wonderful Aikido left to us by the late Morihei Saito Shihan, in its turn a very special continuation of the Founder's Aikido. Present at the seminar was Sensei John Cornish, who actually trained with the founder, Morihei Uyeshiba, O'Sensei, in Japan.

The number of people who contributed to making everything run as smoothly as it undoubtedly did is quite large, and we owe them all a huge vote of thanks: domo arogato kosai mashita.

## 2008 New Years Seminar



What better way to bring the new year in than to spend the day training..This hardy group braved the day and spent an invigorating four hours training – much better than nursing a hangover. And a really nice social event.

### NEXT DOJO SEMINAR DATES

**Easter Bank  
Holiday Monday**  
24<sup>th</sup> March

**Summer Bank  
Holiday – 3 days**  
Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>  
August, Sunday  
24<sup>th</sup> August &  
Monday 25<sup>th</sup>  
August

### *Congratulations....*

Congratulations to Tony Wilkinson whose book 'The Lost Art of Being Happy' at one point reached number 66 in the Amazon.co.uk best sellers list, and which is now also stocked by Waterstones.

## JANUARY GRADING RESULTS

Congratulations to the following who successfully graded on Saturday 26th January 2008:

**6th Kyu: Alan Lambert**

**5th kyu: Macies Bojan**

**4th kyu: Batu Onver, Jo Wheeler, Keith Forward**

**1st kyu: Joe Sealy, Frank O'Sullivan**

The next kyu grading will be on Saturday 26th April 2008.

## Aikido and Zen

by Peter Georgeson

(reproduced with the kind permission of  
the Aikido Shudokan, Melbourne)

Simply choose your favourite aikido technique and  
gain deep Zen insight into your own personality



### Shihonage

You like surprises.  
And folding.  
Origami is your passion. Especially  
Human origami

### Ikkyo

Gradings come and go  
But ikkyo never leaves you.  
Attachment leads to suffering,  
Like ikkyo too close to a wall.

### Nikkyo

The sadist arriveth.  
Hurt is your middle name.  
When you stand, ukes scatter to all corners of  
the dojo,  
Like cherry blossoms on the summer wind.  
You silently ponder: What is the sound of one  
hand cracking?

### Sankyo

Watch uke spin.  
Spin, uke, spin.  
You are power mad. But remember,  
As the caterpillar becomes the butterfly, nage  
becomes uke

### Yonkyo

Zen master say, "He who masters  
yonkyo,  
Is one with the Universe.  
Everything is connected.  
In particular,  
Nage's knuckle, uke's wrist."

### Rokkyo

Seek out The Nikkyo.  
Your wrist, his elbow.  
Cracking in unison, a friendship  
blossoms.  
Possibly in hospital.

### Shomen Uchi Iriminage

"Prepare to blend with the mat"  
Sensei once warned.  
Everything else about that day  
Is forgotten.

### Sokumen Iriminage

A heavy hand upon your heart.  
The oak tree falls with a mighty snap.  
Similar to uke's back.

## Following the 'Do'

by Jenny Lawther



*Sensei Cornish practising the art of ikebana*

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*The concept of "Do", fundamental to the Japanese culture, is different to the Western search for meaning.*

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Most of us know that the 'do' in aikido refers to 'The Way' – not the way to the nearest bar but the esoteric 'way', the way of spiritual enlightenment. We've probably also had drummed into us numerous times that the 'aiki' in aikido refers to harmony – thus, 'the way of harmony'. We also hear a lot about 'budo', the martial way – this is frequently referred to when whatever breach of etiquette we have just committed is described sternly as "not budo".... sorry sensei.

When we think of traditional Japanese culture what springs to mind, apart from budo, are disciplines such as *shodo* (the way of calligraphy), *chado* (the way of tea), *kado* (the way of flowers). The concept of "Do", fundamental to the Japanese culture, is different to the Western search for meaning. It is deeply connected to the recognition of the innate harmony of the laws which govern nature. By adhering to basic forms and techniques of a discipline one cultivates the self. In other words, the practise of the skill

has greater significance than the skill itself (hmmm, ikkyo springs to mind).

At the recent November seminar those who were there early to help set up would have seen Sensei Cornish practising the art of *kado*, or as it is more popularly known, *ikebana* ("bring life to flowers"), as he created the floral arrangement for the kamiza. I wondered what it all meant....

Ikebana's origins date back to sometime around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, to Buddhist ritual offerings. One of the original most skilled priests in the art lived by the side of a lake. The name 'ikebana' is associated with the word 'ikenobo', which translates from the Japanese as 'priest's residence by a pond'.

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century many changes took place in Japan. The Muromachi shogun who ruled Japan at that time loved simplicity. The rules of flower arranging were simplified and it was no longer then only the province of priests and members of the nobility but became available for ordinary people. As in martial arts, new ryu or schools began to appear, each with its' own



interpretations, emphases and traditions. Today there are three main ryu – **Ikenobo** ('classic'), **Ohara** (developed by Unshin Ohara using shorter stemmed Western flowers) and **Sogetsu** (founded in 1926 by Sofu Teshigahara, described as a modern ikebana of 'no limits'). Several million people in Japan practise the 'art of flowers' and the Japanese Ministry of Education has more than 2,000 different schools registered.

True proficiency in ikebana is only achieved after at least 4/5 years and mastery takes many years. It is regarded as being a very creative process despite the many rules, allowing an expression of mood and personality, and it is also considered to be relaxing.



The Zen influence on this art was introduced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There is emphasis on the expression of harmony (as in aikido) and the beauty of life. Everything has significance and, unlike Western floral art, there is an emphasis on lines rather than colour. The art of the arrangement is 'to express the form, beauty and life that flowers have in nature, and

the human spirit'. The spiritual idea is to return to the formless void through form.

Initially arrangements were very tall and broad, set in Chinese bronze vases, and designed for high temple spaces. Later the flowers were arranged to represent a mythical Buddhist mountain named Mt Sumeru which was a symbol of the universe. The late 16<sup>th</sup> century was a very flamboyant era. Around this time the tea ceremony, which had appeared a little earlier, was refined. It emphasised the plain, simple things of life and with it a simpler floral style called 'chabana' or "tea flowers" emerged.

Since then there have been variations on the more formal, classical styles and also the simpler ones. Modern arrangements can often incorporate items like dolls or seasonal fruit and vegetables or even artificial materials such as plastic, metal and glass. Each school favours particular ways of pruning, cutting and caring for the flowers.

Some of the main principles are:

? **Asymmetry** or odd numbers are favoured. This not only

represents nature (and thus creativity) but also incorporates the Buddhist concept of “becoming”, ie travelling on the spiritual path rather than achieving perfection (which is associated with even numbers). Symmetry can also be viewed as stagnation.

- ? Always **three dimensional** – can be viewed from all sides.
- ? **Flowers convey meaning** eg. past, present and future represented by full, half blown and bud respectively.
- ? The **choice of container** is an important part of the design. eg. shape of vase. Also it can change according to the season eg. baskets in summer and autumn, earthen in spring and metal in winter.
- ? **Accent or focal point, overall shape and balance.**
- ? **Use of space.** In aikido we often hear about ‘ma-ai’ which refers to the correct distance or space between uke and nage. Mitsugi Saotome Sensei points out the true mastery of an artist is ‘not expressed in the space filled’ but in the negative space. In floral art this is the proper and balanced use of positive and negative space, just as in Aikido if the ma-ai is incorrect the use of technique will be flawed.

Budo masters frequently use the natural world as a metaphor for the spiritual. O’Sensei always referred back to nature and its innate harmony in developing and teaching aikido – space, yin and yang, heaven and earth – are a few examples. Students ask why we place fresh flowers on the dojo kamiza. It

is to honour and remember the connection between nature and the purpose of our training. Whether it is a formal arrangement or a few fresh flowers placed with care and attention, the “way of flowers’ reminds us that our practice brings us closer to a connection with the natural laws and thus to greater harmony within ourselves. Thus we should never commence our practice in the dojo with the vase being empty or, worse still, being filled with old and withered flowers. Finally, for those of us who didn’t think they would ever read an article on flower arranging, congratulations if you got this far – real men may not eat quiche but they do arrange flowers.



*The finished product on the kamiza– the selection of flowers representing autumn*

# How I Started Aikido

A series of contributions from aikidoka of all ranks. This issue...

## Involvement With Aikido: how it all began for one Aikidoka

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For this aikidoka, Iwama style takemusu Aikido, within our Club, was the first and only experience of practice of any martial art. I first joined the Club and commenced training twenty-one years ago, when we were located at the first of two adjoining addresses in Bath Street, EC1, around mid-February 1987.

Aikido brings changes to all who regularly practice it, but for me it also required a journey to bring me to the point where I could contemplate taking up the art in the first place. Martial or fighting arts had for me, insofar as I thought about or considered them at all, negative connotations of aggression violence, injury, conflict, delinquency and hooliganism, even death.

However, one of my two cousins who independently, and only one in Iwama style, practiced Aikido, pointed out that a martial art was just as much an art as any other of the Arts. Somehow my negative attitude wavered as I looked at Aikido in such a light and later learnt that this style of Aikido was non-competitive and did not depend on physical strength or aggression, and realised that those regularly practicing martial or fighting arts as



members of clubs were less, not more, likely to engage in aggressive, violent, delinquent behaviour than the general population.

Living by myself in self-contained accommodation for the first time, and in a new area, the safety of which I wasn't sure, made me more aware of self defence as an issue needing addressing.

Other beneficial possibilities, extra fitness through the exercise involved, philosophical/spiritual enhancements and the prospects offered for social life – something my cousin seemed to have obtained from Aikido, were also welcome attractions. But I was still wary of entering into what was, at the end of the day, a Martial Art, fearing injuries from the gymnastically-orientated physical movements and confrontations that were apparently called for in Aikido.

Perhaps fellow aikidokas will agree that living alone in a large town lends itself to trying out new things that others may think strange if

not sinister because no family, neighbours, work colleagues or anyone else outside our club need know about it, and there is no-one around at home to need to explain to regarding one's absences caused by doing it. Indeed, I have thus far been a closet aikidoka.

Somehow I got intelligence that the Club trained at the East-West Centre in Old Street EC1 and wrote to the club at that address, receiving in return a leaflet about the Club, with a note explaining that the club now trained nearby at Bath Street. I presented myself there on a Saturday afternoon, which seemed a likely time for training to take place. The club at that hour in 1987 was represented by a man vacuum cleaning the mat area, the training having finished; but I found about and started attending classes in the morning from 8 till 9 am. Once I started, I treated it as a routine activity to be done, like going to work.

**Keith Meredith**

*Aikido brings changes to all who regularly practice it, but for me it also required a journey to bring me to the point where I could contemplate taking up the art in the first place*

**If you are interested in sharing your experience of starting aikido please send your contribution in to the newsletter – email or give to Janice Hemmings. Long or short, all contributions are welcome and we are just as keen to read about the experience of newcomers as the old hands.**

# WEAPONS TRAINING



All Aikido students should practice with weapons. The upswing of the ken is the basic movement of kokyu ho, the downswing with engaged hips is the power stroke of almost every technique. Striking the rubber tire creates great hip stability, and the shime develops grip strength to an extraordinary degree. The jo is essential to understand hanmi and hito e mi.



Each of our 2 practices begin with suburi and tire striking, and then proceed into paired jo (Tuesday) and ken (Sunday). The jo is more diverse and perhaps more interesting, the ken is more fundamental. The Sunday morning practice should really be the most well attended practice of the week. It is hard graft in the most basic Aikido principles.

Since we moved downstairs, there has been no weapons practice at Windus Rd. In reality, with care, it is perfectly possible to do quite a bit.



*Students at Sunday morning weapons class. Above Jodie, Right Christine and Above Right Jochen*

*Paired Ken practice – Batu and Aziz in foreground*



### Next Course Dates

**Jo Tuesday March 18**  
**Ken Sunday April 3**



The jo hasso gaeshi series cannot be done, and taller students will always have a problem, but by being careful where you stand training is perfectly possible. This should make weapons prerequisites obtainable without joining a Rushmore course. A great deal can also be done by just doing the hand action *as if* holding a weapon. So, instructors, please do what you can, and, to quote my first driving instructor, "Just don't hit nothing".

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***All aikido students should practise with weapons***

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Either course may be started at any point – no need to wait for the beginning. The practice is ongoing.

Please get involved if you are not already. It will really sharpen your taijutsu.

**Andy**

And if that's not enough explanation and you are, like me, periodically wondering why you need weapons so

much and is it worth getting up early on a Sunday morning, here are some further points extracted from *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature* by Mitsugi Saitome, some of which explain the source of your weapons training aches and pains...

Sensei Saitome stresses that when using the sword it should be used as an extension of your body and spirit and when you are without it you should move as though you are still holding it.

- When you grasp the weapon your arms naturally come together and move from the centre.
- If your elbows are at the incorrect angle to your body you will find it easier to identify the loss of power.
- If your shoulders are raised and tight then it is easier to feel the tension in the shoulders and to correct it.
- Because of the greater distance from your partner you find that just extending your arms and weapons is limited, you perceive the need to move your entire body.

- When you have a weapon in your hand it is as if each subtle hand movement is magnified so you can see much more clearly how a small hand movement can make a substantial change in a situation
- With a weapon a strike is faster and much more powerful, therefore greater concentration is needed to achieve accuracy and also mistakes hurt more – a great reinforcer!
- You learn to assess the energy or vibrations of the person before you move accurately.



*Alan  
Learning the  
art of  
wielding the  
bokken*

### NEW BOOK

Long term dojo student Jochen Encke has contributed a chapter to "Passionate Supervision" edited by Robin Shoheit, a book for practitioners working in the helping professions to realise the importance of supervision as a space for reflection; compassionate inquiry; and continuing professional development.

# Thinking about starting?

These are the starting (or just started) course dates for the next beginners courses. You will train at the same time every week for ten weeks with an experienced instructor and with other people who are also just starting out.

Don't worry if the course has already started - just turn up. There is a lot of repetition and personal tuition - you will catch up. You will also be provided with a suit as part of the course.

## INSTRUCTOR PROFILE

**Matthew Huggins**

Careful, methodical introduction to basic Aikido training and special care taken with breakfalls. Very popular with students in their first year of training.

Fridays 4-6pm  
Drop-in class

Saturdays 3-5pm  
Course of ten classes

Monday	6-8pm	31 March 2008
Tuesday	7-9pm	8th April 2008
Wednesday	6-9pm	9 April 2008
Thursday	8-10pm	28 February 2008
Friday	7-9pm	14 March 2008
Saturday	12-2pm	16 February 2008
Saturday	3-5pm	16 February 2008
Sunday	10-12am	30 March 2008
Sunday	12.30-2.30pm	30 March 2008

If you have done Aikido before, or feel that you don't need a Beginners Course, then please consult the dojo website ([www.thelondonaikidoclub.co.uk](http://www.thelondonaikidoclub.co.uk)) for the full timetable. If you would like to speak to someone then please leave your contact details on 0208 806 3219.

## *Leaflet drop....*

Many thanks to those who organised and all those who took part in the Stoke Newington leaflet drop in January. There has been a marked increase in local interest since then and increased attendance at Beginners Courses..

# London Aikido Club

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**This Issue***Co-editors:*

Janice Hemmings  
Jenny Lawther

Contributions of all kinds are welcome – articles, short pieces (humorous or other-wise), photos etc. Please email all contributions or queries to Janice Hemmings care of the above email address.

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Next Issue

introducing...

**For our younger members:**

**Next issue we are looking forward to hearing from you! Please send in by email to:**

**[iwama@londonaikidoclub.co.uk](mailto:iwama@londonaikidoclub.co.uk)**

**or pass to your instructor any drawings, articles, poems, photos, jokes you would like to see in the newsletter. They should be related to aikido. This corner is especially for you, so we look forward to hearing from you. Please make sure that anything you send in has your name (first and last name) and your age.**