

# \* \* DOJO \* \*

Newsletter of the London Aikido Club, (founded 1977)  
60A Windus Road, Stoke Newington, N16 6UP

August 1992  
No. 2

"Being powerful is like being a lady  
- if you have to say you are, you ain't"

Anon

## LUCKY DOJO

This is a really great club - and not just because we belong to it! A question often asked of me during my recent trips to see Saito Sensei was 'How much of what he teaches do you practice?'. Another question was 'Do you do the weapons as well?'. And these questions came from the confirmed students of Iwama style! I won't waste time answering the second question, but the answer to the first is, essentially 'Everything'. Our practices are structured in the same way, proceeding from tai no henko, through kokyu ho and basic techniques to kokyu ho. We focus on the intense repetition of the solid basics, but we can do flowing Aikido where appropriate. The basic techniques are accomplished against the full spectrum of attacks, liberally sprinkled with a selection of variations ('henka's'). All of the basic weapons - kumitachi, kumi-jo, ken-tai-jo - are part of the routine of the dojo, and we stress the unity of sword, stick and body in every class. All this technical training goes on in an atmosphere conducive to personal development of the higher goals of Aikido.

The main reason why all this

is possible is that the dojo has been going for a long time - over fifteen years - and with such a large group of long-standing students this material has become part of the club. There are many good people to practice with. The pool of experience on the mat is very diverse.

So, there it is. An excellent pool of enthusiastic and committed training partners, superb premises and the finest material to be found in Aikido.

I feel good about writing this, however much like a salesman it may make me sound, just because it's what I feel. When the dojo started, it was entirely to acquire some training partners for my personal training. I've certainly done this, which is just as well, because however good the dojo is, it's only as good as its desire to go further. I never yet taught a class in which I didn't learn something. We are very lucky.

A.H.

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## OPEN GRADING

The next open grading will be on Saturday 12th September at 6.30pm. Please ensure that membership is up to date, all pre-requisites are signed

for, and that you bring your membership book with you.

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## AIKIDO AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Whole books have been written about this, and in my view their perspective is always very limited. Naturally this is so because the inner meaning of Aikido is attained through the practice itself. The brain cannot jump ahead to an intellectual standpoint and then consider the point attained. Aikido is self-developmental and personal. The growth of the inner person is too intangible for easy description.

Nevertheless, I'm prompted to write a few words to divert attention away from major pitfalls. Aikido is not, for example, a form of esoteric mysticism involving tinkly temple bells, incense burning and meditation. Nor is it a form of Japanese street fighting, a purely defensive system of combat, or a philosophy of non-violence per-se. It is not a religion and it is not underpinned by any specific beliefs except for the very general one that the universe is orderly and can be understood by man as the

result of his direct experience. This is the critical point. Training in Aikido puts us in touch with that all pervasive order. As I said earlier, all we need is to train. The last thing any one should do is to worry about these comments. They are just a few hints to keep us focused on the Aikido and to avoid peripheral distractions.

I always found it helpful to distinguish between educational, ethical and spiritual considerations though naturally there is an inter-dependence between the ideas.

From the educational point of view, we develop the mind and body as a single harmonious unit.

Training teaches the individual to react as a single spontaneous unit to any circumstance. Dojo skills are thus life skills, applicable far beyond the arena in which they were learnt.

Ethically, Aikido teaches how to be strong without struggle. How to divert oncoming energy. How to slip aside and find weak angles. How to avoid confrontation.

With these principles Aikido does lead to an emphasis on non-violence, but perhaps more important it leads to a much clearer perception of what violence is.

The question of spiritual content is at once the easiest and most difficult. Good training requires full attention to detail, to actions in the moment. It requires focused behaviour and the greeting of difficulty with a

warm embrace. It requires the pursuit of perfection not for acknowledgement or reward, but for its own sake. These activities expand the human spirit.

If this superficial view is of interest to you, good! If puzzling remember Lao Tzu:

"He who speaks does not know, and he who knows does not speak"

***KEEP TRAINING!***

A.H.

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## THE BOW

From: 'Aikido and the Harmony of Nature' by Mitsugi Saotome (*Sedirep, France 1985*)

"The opening and closing ceremony of each Aikido practice is a formal bow directed to the shomen, followed by clapping the hands twice, followed by another bow to the shomen and then a bow between the instructor and students. The bows directed to the shomen symbolise respect for the spirit and the principles of Aikido and gratitude to the founder for developing this system of practice and study. The two claps symbolise unity, musubi. The first sends out vibrations to the spiritual world. The second receives the echo of that vibration and connects your spirit with the spirit of the Founder and with the Universal consciousness. The vibration which you send and the echo you receive is dictated by your own spiritual beliefs and attitude."

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## NOTES ON SWORD SUBURI

These are the principle points to look for in any of the sword suburi:

### How to Grip Bokken:

The grip is firmly rooted in the little fingers. The left hand little finger goes right to the end of the sword, the right hand little finger is as high on the handle as possible, without the right index finger touching the imaginary tsuba (guard).

The hands should be twisted in slightly so that the thumbs do not rest on top of the sword. The palms of the hand rest on top. This also has other effects on the correctness of the swing which we will come to later.

### Correct Form:

When we start to swing the sword, the most important thing for us to look for is correct form. Saito Sensei is always saying that it doesn't matter how many times you add zero to zero, the result is still zero. So, hacking, slashing or stroking away, expending lots of energy or none at all is not correct.

Every single sword stroke should be a single strong individual cut with full ki on the upswing, a full downswing and lots of zanshin at the end. Each cut is an individual cut, not one of a sequence of ten, or a hundred, or a thousand. You should do one complete individual movement and then the next. Don't try and get everything right at once. One thing at a time. There are an awful lot of principles

in the sword and we have to get them right one step at a time.

## Correct Stance:

Correct power comes from the pelvis. When the sword is swung down, the pelvis tips forwards. This causes a lot of problems. Some people bend both legs and bob up and down. Other people stick their bottoms out and bend forward at the waist.

The back leg should remain straight, the front leg bends and the abdomen is pulled in, so that there is a tipping feeling of the body, without coming excessively off the vertical.

If you are bent double, it's wrong. If your bottom is sticking out, it's wrong. It is also wrong if you are just standing up straight and swinging the sword up and down with no connection to your hips. The real secret is to put the energy, the brain, into your centre. Hips push up, hips pull down, hips push up, hips pull down. This is much better and much easier than trying to coordinate hundreds of things at a time.

## The Sword Swing:

The sword swing should be straight down the middle, down the centre of the body. If the right leg is forward (basic stance), there is a tendency sometimes to bias the cut towards the right. This is not correct. It is much more important to get the cut straight down the middle in line with your navel. This is very important.

When the cut is made the

arms should drop in a flexible pattern - shoulders, elbows, hands, sword. Shoulders should be soft. With hard shoulders the cut can never be made correctly. Don't hack with the shoulders or flick with the wrists - those methods have no power.

The initial kamai (stance) is with the sword extended in front of you, at a natural distance in front, not too far and not too near; the sword point at a level with your own throat. There should be a feeling of projection forward (or menace, if you want to look at it in martial arts terms).

The sword is swung up, and then brought down fully and the hips are settled. The bokken should be parallel to the floor, roughly at the height of your own navel. With longer arms it can be a bit lower. It should not be too close into your body, and certainly not as low down as the groin.

When the upswing is made the left hand should be high, the left arm should be stretched up, and the front leg should be moved forward and back. It is not correct either to hold the sword just on top of your head (making yourself go bald with the back and forward movement), nor is it correct to rock back and forwards without moving your front foot. This is a common error - a rocking motion is developed rather than a compressing action.

It is important to make a big arc with the sword swing, so that the left hand goes high and the sword hangs down the back, followed by a big swing down with the

shoulders relaxed.

The elbows must be kept in when the upswing is made. Elbows should be together not stuck out to the side. The Japanese say if you show your enemy your elbows, you are already dead. This is very true.

The hands should be correct, twisted over the top and swinging down. If the thumbs are on top of the sword, the elbows will tend to stick out. It is also necessary that you get a smooth consistent motion. If the elbows are flapping like wings it is not possible to get a smooth action.

Everything should be relaxed, but once the bottom of the stroke is reached the bokken should be squeezed. The little fingers should be firm and the other fingers tightened in sequence up to the index finger in a wringing motion, like wringing out a cloth. This is wringing out a cloth by twisting your wrists inwards. The tightening action should be at that moment only - power is needed at the moment of impact.

If thumbs are on top of the sword at the moment of impact there is reverberation or 'bounce back' into your hands.

A few minutes practice a day, just twenty or thirty cuts is excellent. If you don't have the ceiling height, then do it without a sword, or use half a broom handle. We learn to use the sword, not to learn to swing a sword but as a tool to develop certain kinds of body habits. The logic of that is that we can practice those body habits without actually having the

sword.

The sword is not an easy thing to learn at all. O Sensei regarded the sword swing as the essential ingredient of kokyu. He said that if anyone could master kokyu in a week, then he would already give them the highest grade in Aikido.

The sword is a very important learning tool, and the fact that you have learnt to use a weapon in such a way that it would be very difficult for anyone to beat you unless they had a superior weapon is a bonus.

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## TELEGRAPHING

- Lyn Gameson

Martial arts magazines increasingly carry articles on Aikido. Some of these are tiresomely abstract eg a common theme being the 'Ki - does it exist or not?' saga. However, I saw one article on the subject of telegraphing, which seemed quite relevant to 'our' brand of Aikido.

Telegraphing - meaning to unintentionally signal one's intentions to the opponent, might be thought on face value to be relevant only to the competitive arts eg Karate, judo. Obvious telegraphs would include a judoka glancing at his opponent's sleeve before trying to grip it. Some unfortunate tournament competitors become renowned for more subtle telegraphs eg one particular judoka always blinked before attempting a footsweep; observant opponents would start to counter as soon as they saw the blink.

A simple example of telegraphing might occur at the beginning of our classes. tori invites an attack by offering his hand. Uke might respond by focusing on tori's hand before grabbing it. Although uke 'knows' that tori is going to execute nothing more threatening than tai no henko, it is unlikely that someone who telegraphs during such a common technique it suddenly going to 'switch on' and become inscrutable during subsequent techniques.

Going back to the article: the writer (Dave Lowry) observed an incident in an Aikido dojo where a senior student was uke during a pinning technique - probably nikkyo. As the technique was applied, the uke would spasm, jerking both legs up at the knees. He was admonished for telegraphing.

Although telegraphing is usually thought of in terms of giving out precipitous signals, the involuntary signalling of pain indicates that uke is not in control of his own situation.

The article was not advocating that aikidoka should tolerate pain, it was simply pointing out that martial arts such as Aikido have an accepted method of signalling pain - by tapping to indicate submission; obviously this is a voluntary action which allows uke some control of his situation. The involuntary 'spasm' movements suggest that uke has no control over what information is being relayed to an attacker.

Finally, one of the most

public (and completely forgiveable) examples of telegraphing occurred during the Olympics. Karen Briggs, one of the British judoka, dislocated her shoulder during her semi-final bout, and attempted to fight on despite the obvious injury. Her impending defeat was effectively signalled to millions of viewers.

L.G.

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## Kokyu ho - breath meditation

From 'Aikido The way of Harmony' by John Stevens under the supervision of Shirata Rinjiro. (*Shambhala Publications 1984*)

"The founder once said, "Aikido begins and ends with Kokyu". Kokyu means 'breath' with the special connotation of 'being in tune with other people and with one's surroundings'; it also signifies the 'knack' or 'key point' of a technique or process.

To breathe is to live, and to live is to breathe. Existence starts with an exhalation, the shout of life; when the breath stops, our sojourn here is over. Breath sparks life and vivifies the body; as long as our kokyu is deep and steady we will flourish.

Kokyu, however, is not mere mechanical breathing with the lungs; it is the fundamental rhythm of life that energizes and fills the universe. To develop good kokyu we need profound insight into the nature of existence and correct application of certain principles. In Aikido that is known as 'kokyu-ho', 'breath

meditation'."

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## VIDEO LIBRARY

The video library is now up and running. Videos may be borrowed in return for a donation of £5 to club funds. The usual period of the loan is one week. Some of the more useful ones are also for sale. Please enquire.

The instructional videos are also now becoming available. These show Andy giving detailed tuition in various aspects of Aikido.

Tapes available so far are:

1. THE GRADING SYLLABUS 6th kyu to 2nd kyu (53 minutes)
2. KOKYU NAGE (2h 30m )
3. TANTO TORI (1h 10m)
4. YOKOMEN UCHI (Running time not currently available)

In preparation:

1. General Introduction to Aikido
2. The Beginners Course
3. Kihon Course 1
4. Kihon Course 2
5. Basic Techniques

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## GENERAL MATTERS

Students wishing to pay by standing order can negotiate an arrangement.

Members who have paid membership and not given in their photos, please do so. All members should have a white book.

Any comments and suggestions for future newsletters would be gratefully received.

Andy has attended two seminars with Saito Sensei in Europe this year from which club training has benefited hugely.

Anyone who hasn't trained for a while is advised to come back and see what's happening!!

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## PRIVATE LESSONS

Individual private tuition can be valuable in solving particular problems and focusing training. Private tuition is now the responsibility of Clare Cooney (081-888-6973), a long standing second dan of LAC.

Andy also takes private students by appointment.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

We have membership books for the following people, but we still need your PHOTOGRAPHS!!

Jean Thieffrey  
Shinichiro Miyakana  
Anna Maria Porzio  
Jasper Hart  
Dominic Stuart  
Rupert Hall  
Laurel Marks  
Mary Finn  
Juan Antonio Sedeno  
Aurelio Barranco  
Dean Cunningham  
Travers Cooper  
Bernard Dodd

Richard Cheetham  
Ian McLaughlin  
Anday Bain  
Jan Lind

Please bring in your two passport size photographs and claim your membership books.

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## SIDELINE

On his many fishing expeditions, Andy often catches more trout than he can use. Yvonne is now marinading and smoking these fish. They can be bought from her at £3.00 per pound, subject to availability. Everyone who has tried them can tell you how good they are. For more details please speak to Yvonne personally.

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Don't forget we need contributions from everyone. Any scandal, gossip, jokes, opinions, new aikido definitions, thoughts on training, or Aikido generally should be left on the front desk (with your name on it please) or given direct to Janice Hemmings.

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## STREETWISE AIKIDO - LYNNE GAMESON

AIKIDO	- means never having to say you're sorry
DAN	- bloke who knows ken and jo very well
DOMO ARIGATO KOSAI	
MASHTA	- 'Thank god thats over!'
'GRRRRRRR!	- sound Ian makes. Probably means 'Thank you for
practising with me'.	
JIYU WAZA	- jolly good scrap
KI	- something you realise you left at home when people are locked out on the stairs
KIA	- loud sounds emitted when focused
KARAOKE	- loud sounds emitted when inebriated
KOKYU NAGE	- term given to technique that Andy has forgotten name for
KUBI OSAE	- death by armpit
LONDON AIKIDO CLUB	- friendly drop-in centre for students waiting for Wheatsheaf opening time
MAITA	- means 'didn't you hear me tap, you deaf p*****k!'
NIDAN	- someone whose hakama doesn't fall down after ten minutes
PONGI	- smelly suit
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN	
KEN AND JO	- idle club gossip
SUWARI WAZA	- techniques chosen by Andy when tatami needs cleaning
SEIZA	- posture; so named because knees seize up
TANTO	- loyal indian friend of ki musubi
ZANSHIN	- giving your partner a chance to lie on the floor
ZORI	- what you say when you accidentally step on someone's foot

If you would like to share any of your own private (printable) definitions with us, please send them in.

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### DETAILS OF COURSES

Do not worry if the course you wish to attend has already started. Late starting is not a problem, especially for the weapons courses.

#### Tuesday 8-10pm:

A well attended course taught by Andy. Explores relationships between weapons and unarmed training. Develops the most basic and important principles underlying all Aikido. Attended by a wide cross section of students from beginners to 2nd dans.

Restarts SEPTEMBER 8TH, and as many students as possible are encouraged to

enrol. Really explores the essence of Aikido.

#### Thursday 6-8pm:

Working toward red/yellow belt. Starts on SEPTEMBER 10TH.

#### Thursday 8-10pm:

Oriented to teaching for yellow/orange belts. This is a very friendly group making rapid progress. The next course begins on AUGUST 6TH.

#### Friday 8-10pm:

A new beginners course started on JULY 31ST.

#### Saturday 12-2pm:

A new course working from yellow to orange belt. Restarts on OCTOBER 17th.

#### Saturday 2-4pm:

Working towards orange/green belt level. This course restarts on OCTOBER 17TH. An excellent restart time.

#### Saturday 4-6pm:

Working towards yellow belt. Restarts OCTOBER 17TH.

#### Sunday 10-12am:

This is a special weapons course relating armed to unarmed training with special emphasis on atemi (striking to vital points) and the combative aspects of Aikido. Restarted on AUGUST 23RD, and is suitable for all students.

#### Sunday 12-2pm:

New Beginners Course starts SEPTEMBER 18TH.

**Sunday 2-4pm:**  
Careful study of ken and its relationship to various techniques. Good introduction to Aikido weapons practice. Restarts on **SEPTEMBER 18TH.**

**Sunday 4-6pm:**  
Friendly group working towards orange belt rank, and studying the basic techniques ("kihons"). A good place for a lapsed student to restart from. Restarts **SEPTEMBER 13TH.**

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Contributors: *Lyn Gameson, Yvonne Tabailou, Andy Hathaway, Janice Hemmings.*

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**BUSINESS CARDS:**  
(free insertion!!)

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**HEATING PLUMBING & ELECTRICAL**

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**WORD PROCESSING SERVICE**

Ring Chrissie on

081-543-6001  
or see Lyn Gameson

**INVOICES, CV's, LETTERS,  
REPORTS, THESIS,  
MANUSCRIPTS**

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**Julian Russell**  
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