

合気道

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Koshukai 2007

Reminding all students that the dates for the International Koshukai Aikido Seminar on **Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th November** are looming.

LAC is responsible for the successful organisation of the seminar and we require the support of all our students. Whether you are currently training, haven't trained for a while, whether you are experienced, a beginner, or somewhere in between, your support is needed. All running costs come from seminar fees. We need completed registration forms and payment as soon as possible. Full details and form on the website or copies are available in the dojo, just ask one of the sempais. All

participants are very welcome and encouraged to join the Saturday buffet dinner after training (£15 additional cost).

It is an honour to train under these two highly respected shihan. Your benefit is the transmission of aikido on all levels that you receive, and meeting and sharing aikido with people from other dojos. Your duty and responsibility as an aikidoka is to support your sensei and your dojo and to help in making the event run smoothly.

If you are willing to offer assistance in other ways please speak to either Janice Hemmings or Joe Rossabi.

Kelmscott Leisure Centre

Features of the Centre

- **Men and women's facilities.** Basic showers, toilets and 30 (50p returnable) lockers. Bags can also be placed in the hall.
- **Access** will not be through the main entrance. We will be using as our entrance a fire exit leading directly into the sports hall. This will be signposted, but as you face the main entrance, bear left around the building and you can't miss it. There is a free car park.
- **Snacks and drinks:** there are the usual range of vending machines for snacks and cold drinks, and there is a small Somerfield shop attached to the petrol station directly opposite the Leisure Centre. It is visible from the main entrance and is less than a five minute walk away. No cafe or hot drinks available on site.
- **Centre and major shops** are in the area around the high street, and between St James overground railway station and Walthamstow Central tube and bus station. There are the usual

range of fast food outlets and restaurants, and a large Sainsburys.

How to get there

If you're not used to travelling in London, allow at least one extra hour travelling time for ticket queries, travel disruption and losing your way.

Use the Transport for London website: [http://www.tfl.gov.uk/Journey Planner](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/Journey_Planner) for your best route to Kelmscott. Click on the 'Advanced options' for the best range of options.

If you don't need a route, only a map of where it is then, www.streetmap.co.uk

From Stansted:

'One' line train towards Liverpool St – change at Tottenham Hale Underground Station (approx 30 mins)

2. Tottenham Hale Tube Station – take Victoria Line tube towards Walthamstow Central.

3. Get off at Walthamstow Central Tube.

4. Walk to Kelmscott Leisure Centre – approx 13 mins medium walking speed.

A Letter from Greece ...

I arrived in Greece on Thursday 30th of April 2006 exactly at midnight after 9 years in London. I had spent 5 of those training at the London Aikido club and it would not be an exaggeration to say that my major concern for my future in Greece was to find a dojo to continue my training. I had discussed the issue with Andy and he had suggested that I started my own group. At 2nd kyu this seemed like a challenge...

24 hours later I started calling all the dojos I could find and booked a total of 4 sessions from Monday to Thursday. There was no mention of Iwama anywhere but I remained hopeful. The first dojo I went to was run by a rather big fellow and I noticed that, just like him, his students used a lot of power and arm strength to throw each other around. I walked.

The next day, I went to what is considered Chiba's headquarters in Athens (birankai). The senior instructor looked at my paperwork and said that I would probably not fit in there, coming from an Iwama culture. She did not even invite me on the mat to train. I was not too disappointed, if I wanted ballet classes my sister would gladly teach me.

The third day I met a kind young man, a new 2nd dan who had started his school about a year ago at the time. They were giving it a fair shot but it would be like driving a scooter after having owned a Ferrari. Still they made each other look good, as they flew several feet away at the slightest hint of a technique. I trained with them and thanked them, promising to maintain my links with them.

On the fourth day, I visited a dojo which was based in a strange looking basement. The instructor was also a 2nd dan but not because he had not been practicing long enough. He had just stopped grading about 20 years ago and he was evidently very experienced at what he was doing. It

seemed my only option, so I thought I would stick to that for a while.

The lesson started with about one hour of Jubi Udo exercises. Andy's words echoed in my head "If they start doing all those breathing exercises and other "spiritual" stuff, just leave." "But I have nowhere to go, I thought" at the same time almost falling asleep during an "expand your ki" exercise.

Time went by and though I tried to convince myself several times that this was sufficient it soon became evident that I could not adjust. The weapons taught were practically the same each day, every time I gripped my opponent firmly I was accused of being difficult and whenever I demonstrated any Iwama technique I was confronted with sarcasm from students with similar or less experience than me, who had decided that black was a good colour belt to wear. I was getting fed up and though the Sensei was very kind in demonstrating some Iwama techniques every time I asked him to, I was dreading each training day. This was not how I wanted my aikido to be.

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In the mean time I had been back to London two times and having trained with Andy, Janice, Paddy, Phil and the rest of you, it became evident that it would be best to practice Iwama on my own rather than pretend I enjoyed what I was doing. Having also trained at a dojo in LA, which called itself "Iwama", I was also convinced that the use of the word is no guarantee of quality.

At that point luck struck at my door. The most experienced student in the dojo with about 20 years of aikido

'It would be like driving a scooter after having owned a Ferrari'





experience, joined me in a seminar taught by Sensei Sergeant, the only Iwama practitioner in Greece (unfortunately living and practicing on an island about 5 hours away from Athens). He (currently Sensei Giannis Mihailos) liked it and decided that this was the time to start his own school and put some order in his practice. We found a space and got down to work with the help of an increasingly big collection of Saito Sensei books and dvds. Every day, he brings something new that he has seen from Saito Sensei and once a week I teach our 3 students and him Iwama weapons. I have maintained my contacts with Andy and the London Aikido Club and hope that I

can visit and perhaps continue grading at the London Aikido Club. From time to time we also attend Sensei Sergeant's seminars. Strange how sometimes you are better off following early advice but as you all know, some things we need to find out for ourselves. It has now been about 6 months since we started and I have not looked back once. I hope to be able to welcome some of you to it and look forward to organising a seminar for Andy to teach in the future.

With best wishes,

Vassilis Antonas

In Search of a Kiai

I lost my kiai one rainy day,
I'd been off the mat and it went away.
I trained without it for a week
But with no kiai I had poor technique.
So I studied the kiais I heard around
And was amazed at the difference in each one's sound.
I was looking for one that sounded just right
With depth and tone and not too light.
There were tiny sharp ones like a Pekinese,
But I decided I didn't want one of these.
Some were sharp and snappy and very tight
But they didn't give an impression of might.
Some exhaled quite slowly like a deep wheeze,
And some exploded like a short sneeze.
Some were timid and quiet like a mouse's squeak
And I know I needed to continue to seek
The kiai that expressed just who I could be
With strength and focus and, of course, harmony.
There were kiais that rang like a loud shout
Packing a verbal punch with some clout.
Some ended in 'up' and others in 'ee'
But I wasn't sure if they were quite me.
One put a 'ho' into kokyu ho

And others were deep and very low.
I'd heard one before that was a Japanese word
But I felt I'd probably sound like a nerd.
Some growled like a cat that wasn't too well
And others were plainly a very loud yell.
I'd looked far and wide and thought and thought
But hadn't found the kiai I'd sought.
I'd puzzled and puzzled, but 'twas all in vain,
The search was starting to drive me insane.
Then I remembered what Sensei said:
"When you do aikido, get out of your head."
So I grabbed a strong uke who was hard to shift
Whom I couldn't push and couldn't lift.
I inhaled with strength and moved from the hips
And I thought about power, not the sound from my lips.
Uke's balance was lost when, with a deep roar,
The sound bubbled up from my very core.
At last I'd found what I had sought –
A kiai is formed, it cannot be taught.
It can't really be copied or given on loan –
The kiai you'll have will be all your own.

Jenny Lawther



August Bank Holiday Gasshuku

Thanks to Matthew, Vasco, Steve, Sam, John, Janice, Evelyne, Naim, Aziz, Bernard, Alan, Emma, Jenny, Keith, Martin, Phil, Lyn, Rodney, Joe, Joe R and Paddy for attending the 3 day August Bank Holiday Seminar, and making it a success. Apologies for any missed names but you didn't sign the register.

"Concentrate on your aikido, it won't be improved by looking sideways."
Sayings of Hathaway Sensei
Vol. 1



The photo is of the survivors who made it to the last class, where after a weekend of basics we had a thoroughly enjoyable ganseki otoshi and garuma class. Those of you who have a future as weight-lifters, you know who you are!

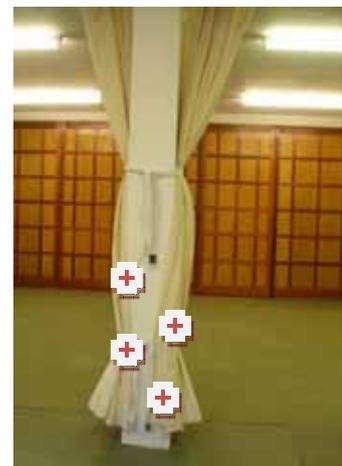
A sempai's work is never done...



Q: How many people does it take to tie the curtain? A: *Depends who's tying it!*

Ouch!

The pillar has been christened by Matthew (on several occasions) and Jenny. Some people just can't stay out of trouble.





"How I started training ..."

In 1985 I was working in Middle Street at the edge of the City of London. My boss, after working late one night told me that he had heard loud noises coming from a nearby basement, and thought it was a karate club. Since I had been doing karate for a little while, I went to have a look.

The basement was closed, but I saw a notice for "The London Aikido Club". I had never heard of Aikido, but since the notice said it was a Japanese martial art, I decided to investigate as I thought it must be similar to karate.

I registered for a Saturday afternoon beginners course, and turned up for the first class with no idea what to expect. I was recovering from a stress fracture in my right foot from doing a lot of old-style high impact aerobics. I had wrapped my foot in three layers of 'tubigrip' and thought I wouldn't be able to do it, whatever it was, because I was sure that my foot would explode.

I went down into a damp basement that smelled of cat pee, through the mens changing area (eyes averted) into the women's changing area and put on my new suit. In those days we used lightweight judo gi's rather than the karate style that we use now. The mat was a stretched canvas one, over a strangely lumpy surface, like sinking into very thick, weight bearing porridge. For people who haven't experienced one of these mats, the canvas really toughens up the feet, and dragging feet over the seams quite quickly produces blisters.

I huddled with the other new students in a corner of the mat and waited for the instructor. Two men with black skirts eventually came in and set up a projector. I know now that it was a film of O'Sensei, but I only remember an

impression of someone bouncing people off the walls, and thinking I would quite like to be able to do that.

The class continued with stretching exercises, and then some techniques. I remember a lot of dragging, hauling and falling combined with a lot of laughter.

My foot did hurt, but no more than it did walking around, so I continued. The teachers seemed remote to me, but we students bonded with a Dunkirk spirit (.. We will fight them on the beaches We will never surrender).

I also remember two people occasionally coming to the edge of the mat halfway through the classes. I had no idea who they were, but the man kept shouting at the students and the instructors, and I wished he would shut up and go away. He turned out to be Andy, the Chief Instructor.

This beginners course was 12 three hour classes, and I remember once a back covered in bruises and blisters, combined with sea sickness from having practiced break falls continuously for over an hour. I remember Roger (instructor) with his head in his hands from despair, when we were even worse than usual. I remember that being thrown by Roger was like being blasted through the ground to Australia, but that being thrown by Tim was like ending up on the floor with no idea of how I had got there. I wanted to do it like Tim.

I also remember the moment that they relaxed with us beginners. We had all managed to throw into the centre of the room at the same time, and had a multi-student pile up involving everyone on the mat. The lesson had to stop until we all (including teachers) stopped laughing.



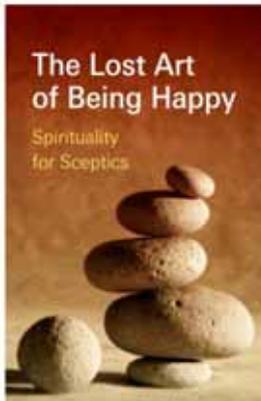
The man kept shouting at the students and instructors and I wished he would shut up and go away.



When the course finished, I immediately signed up for the next one.

Janice Hemmings

"The Lost Art of Being Happy"



An interview with Tony Wilkinson

Tony Wilkinson is interviewed about his forthcoming book "The Lost Art of Being Happy – Spirituality for Sceptics" (Findhorn Press, October)

Q: OK, what's the book about?

Its an attempt to answer the fundamental question of what we have to do to live happily, which I take it we all want. A lot of the time we aim in the wrong direction, because we think that owning things, getting what we want, or even being good at aikido will make us happy. The key realisation is that living happily depends on your mind, meaning not just your intellect but also emotion, desire, and so on – the whole of conscious experience in fact, which I call the inner life. Deep happiness requires peace of mind no matter what the circumstances, so if you want to be happy you have to pay the inner life some attention.

Q: So what does that involve?

A: The inner life is based on habits or patterns. You react inwardly to whatever happens to you in ways someone who knew you well could predict but the result may or may not preserve your peace of mind. If you can make yourself aware of these patterns – the tendency to become angry with certain people for example – you can try to change the habit. Anger is a good example because you can't be angry and happy at the same time, so if your goal is really to be happy it would help to weaken the habits which produce anger. To do that you first have to become aware of these habits and second you need to build up a different

way of responding. A new habit you deliberately acquire is a skill, so happiness, peace of mind, depends on building up skills of the inner life. Building up skills requires practice, as we all know from the mat, so happiness depends on practice and skills, which is why I call it an art.

Q: What does this have to do with spirituality?

A: This whole process of paying attention to the inner life, building up inner skills and eliminating unhelpful habits, which if you take it seriously amounts to a way of living, is very similar to spiritual practice as understood by all religions. Also, the "skills" you need to build are in many cases similar to the virtues prized by religions. But the motivation is different: you don't need to believe anything about spirits or the supernatural (or indeed spacemen), you get the same practical consequences just by focusing on the importance of living happily.

Q: Isn't it a bit selfish, self centred?

A: Once you realise that your happiness depends on your own inner life and the basis of habits on which it rests it would be silly not to change that basis, if you can, to live more happily. Nobody else can do this work for you. But if your happiness depends on your inner life and my happiness on my inner life, we are not in competition and we can't do the work for each other. So seeking my own happiness is not selfish, understood in this way it's the only way forward. In fact, compassion and altruism turn out to be useful practices for the benefit of my own inner life, because they combat some of the worst negative emotions like anger and hatred which prevent happiness.

Q: It sounds a bit like Buddhism.

A: It borrows huge amounts, but not the cosmology or belief system which underlie even the most austere forms of Buddhism. It's also closely related for example to Sufism with its idea of eliminating "nafs" or bad habits, to many Christian ideas and to non-religious philosophies like Stoicism and the much-misunderstood Epicureanism. I don't claim to have invented this stuff, I've just tried to restate the basic ideas in ways that make sense to a modern audience and don't depend on supernatural belief. That way it can be useful to sceptics but also to religious people because it doesn't impinge on any belief.

**Happy****Q: What does it have to do with aikido?**

A: Learning aikido is a near perfect metaphor for the process of developing inner skills – constant practice, being in

it for the long haul, the ability to remain committed even when it isn't going well, the continual business of getting things wrong and trying again, valuing the process and not being impatient about the destination, being good humoured about your own faults and most importantly the amazing difference practice makes over long periods. Often in aikido we do things "as if" – as if the attack were in earnest, for example - and it makes a difference both to the physical technique and to what we learn inwardly from it. That is a vital principle in building the skills of the inner life. It's also true, for me at least, that aikido itself helps practice many useful inner skills, like mindfulness, patience, humility, letting go of ego and so on, which are important for happiness. I couldn't have written the book without the things I've learned about practice and its effects, just by training.

**Kids Classes**

If you hadn't noticed, the Thursday 6.30pm class is now a thriving children's class taught by Evelyne Faury and assisted by Keith Forward. Lively, energetic and lots of fun, it can remind many of us of the joys of the beginner's mind.

The night I attended the mat was crowded with enthusiastic enthusiastic youngsters with lots of energy, having a great time. After ukemi practice (a few sore heads!), some jo kata and basic kihon techniques, the class was rounded off with an exciting game of Cat and Mouse. I wasn't sure what the rules were but the sheer enjoyment of the eager participants looked like lots of fun. Judging by the numbers, it looks like a weekend class might be on the schedule soon. Bring your kids and their friends!

**Beginners Course Dates:**

**Monday 6-8pm starts 22nd
October**

**Tuesday 7-9pm starts 13th
November.**

Wednesday 6.30-8pm starts
14th Nov

Thursday 8-10pm starts 11th
October

Friday 7-9pm starts 26th
October

Saturday 12-2pm starts 8th
December

Saturday 2-4pm starts 8th
December

Sunday 12.30-2.30 starts 4th
November

Make Mistakes Correctly

(from Kodo: Ancient Ways
By Kensho Furuya)

- The common person turns his mistakes into a bigger mistake. The wise man turns his mistake into an advantage.
- Man has the ability to take something bad and turn it into something good. This is why man is so great.
- Don't be afraid of making mistakes; be afraid of not learning what valuable lesson they have to offer you.

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Matters of the spirit

During a conversation I had with Ulf Sensei at a recent seminar in Italy, he mentioned that he had asked Saito Sensei whether it was necessary to do additional practices in aikido, in particular the kotodama(chanting) and such like.

Saito Sensei's reply was that on several occasions he had asked O'Sensei if he should practise these various spiritual and religious matters. O'Sensei's emphatic answer was no, these were his

own practices; whatever he had taken from them he had put into aikido, so you only need to practise aikido.

I was very glad to hear this as I have always maintained that we should just concentrate on our aikido, it won't be improved by looking sideways.

**Sensei Andy
Hathaway**

London Aikido Club

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This issue

Co-editors:
Janice Hemmings
Jenny Lawther

And finally ...

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the newsletter, and those who allowed their photograph to be taken.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter please email your contribution to iwama@londonaikidoclub.co.uk.



kokyu