

## Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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### A Tranquil pace in South Birmingham



My husband, who died in 2010, was my soul mate, a gentle man who travelled to China quite a lot on business. He loved the culture and ancient wisdoms, and so, not long after I thought I would try my local Tai Chi class (a) because it was a way of getting out and meeting people and (b) I had been delving into it via the internet which explained how you could find balance and relaxation through its gentle exercise and meditation.

A few months after I moved to another house and wanted a way in which I could bring in his presence and his love of anything oriental to the new house.

So I decided to create a tranquil place with Feng Shui elements, a place where I could find inner peace and remember all our good times. I used the tai Chi symbol (yin-yang) as it represents male and female, mountain and river, winter and summer – everything in life has to have an opposite to create balance. My garden was duly created to include the oriental fortune cup water feature, if it brings me any fortune I will let you know.

I will leave you now with a picture in your mind of me, trying to do the Tai

Chi form in the garden and who is in no doubt that the neighbours must think I'm absolutely bonkers!  
Kate Granger – student, Kings Heath class



Kai Ming Membership, what does it mean?

A student recently asked “why do I need the annual membership?” I was just about to blurt out the party line of “it’s a requirement of...” When I stopped and thought for a moment, what does membership really mean? I looked it up and the definition is ‘A **member** is a person who belongs to a social group or an entity such as a company or nation’. Kai Ming was set up in 1995 to share all aspects of Tai Chi, openly and honestly, without exclusion or judgement; Kai Ming literally translates as OPEN MINDED and is the ethos of our organisation but how does that translate into the running of the club and the benefits to its members?

Kai Ming has steadily grown from firm roots giving the instructors the opportunities to develop and the students the opportunities to share in their knowledge and application of Tai Chi Chuan and Chi-kung (qigong), be this health and/or self-defence. So many people come along just expecting a weekly tai chi class which they then find develops into a strong social group giving them the opportunity to learn tai chi and develop new friends. Because of this it is

natural to want to strengthen and develop the roots and branches from which these opportunities grow. Membership of Kai Ming is more than just an annual fee, it is contributing to its sharing and development; the monthly newsletter you are now reading comes from member contributions and aims to share knowledge and experience, but how is this produced and paid for? DVD’s and books help us learn, but how are they funded? Club tops are nice to wear, but how are they made available at a good price? Recognition and membership of the official UK governing bodies are essential to ensure our club has good standing and is reputable, but how is this funded?

All this, plus insurance against accident or injury whilst practicing tai chi at your class, are covered in your annual membership fee of £15 which hasn’t increased in over 10 years. Members also gain discounts on all products and courses. **All new students are given a month to see if they like tai chi and our approach before they have to pay the membership fee.** Other Martial Art clubs have asked to join and use our membership as it is such good value, but we keep it only for our members so our members gain the benefits and value.

We want you not just to pay the £15 each because it is a requirement of the governing bodies in the UK, but because you want to continue to invest in your tai chi club and fellow members. We want you to contribute and enjoy the newsletters and as the time is nearing, we would love you all to attend the Christmas Party on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December in Birmingham. Details are on the back page of this newsletter.

I hope this is food for thought and you will continue to enjoy the benefits of membership of Kai Ming and continue to develop your enjoyment and skills in Tai Chi Chuan.

Please contribute to these newsletters and share your experiences.

## A VIEW FROM THE FRONT OF THE CLASS A Tai Chi Journey



When I first started Tai Chi with Kai Ming over ten years ago, there was no way I thought that one day I would become a full-time Instructor; this is my journey.

My reason for starting Tai Chi was because of the health benefits I knew the 'art' contained. My family health history was rather poor; when I was 11 my father died from an industrial related lung disease (pneumoconiosis) and in my late twenties my mother died from a brain aneurysm. Over the past few years two of my brothers have died from heart disease and one of my sisters survived a heart attack. I, therefore, knew I needed Tai Chi to improve my chance of survival and so far so good.

My first introduction to Tai Chi was from an Instructor who studied the Wu style of Bruce Kumar Frantzis; I trained with him for a couple of years until he returned to his native home, Scotland. I then found it very difficult to find another teacher. At that time, the Internet was in its infancy and there was very little information out there. After a couple of years of searching, I stumbled upon a Kai Ming class which Heather and Dave Jones ran in Lichfield - from my previous experience in Wu style Tai Chi, Shotokan and Goyararu Karate I knew this class was the 'real deal'.

After a couple of years studying with Heather and Dave, they asked me if I would be interested in training to become an Instructor. At first I declined the offer as, at that time, I was working shifts which included weekends and I knew I would not be able to commit time to the extra training. Heather and Dave would not take no for an answer and over the

next twelve months coerced and badgered me to relent and so, with encouragement also from John and Lynne (now at Tamworth), in 2004 I and my fellow trainee Mark Walker joined the Sunday morning Instructors class which was led by Chief Instructor Mark Peters. This was certainly a real learning curve as the quality of the instruction was superb with the likes of Don, Ian, Gary and Raj passing on their skills freely and with good grace.

Towards the end of that first year Mark Peters came up with the idea of a Sunday afternoon junior instructor programme which would start in January 2005; Mark Walker, Josie, Steve, Dave and I were some of the first students to take part. This was a really good apprenticeship for me as the sessions taught me how to deal with class problems, structure a lesson, be confident and clear with instructions and, of course, the dreaded homework which made you study and delve deeper into the history and art of Tai Chi.

In December 2005 I was graded as a junior instructor and rejoined the full instructor class. I was now, again, able to soak up from their pool of knowledge, which must have worked, as the following December I became a 'Full Instructor'.

A year later, Mark Peters asked me and Mark Walker to open a Sutton Coldfield class, which we did. This class is still going strong with many 'hard core' students who are there every week and are always open and friendly to newcomers in the true spirit of Kai Ming.

In the middle of 2009 a crossroads occurred in my life when, due to the credit crunch, the printing company I worked for went into administration and closed. As many printing companies had closed over the past few years I knew it would be very hard to find employment again. What else could I do, perhaps Tai Chi? After discussions and encouragement from my wife, Marlena, and a few months research including advice and encouragement

from Mark and Jenny I decided to become a full-time self employed Tai Chi Instructor.

This was a real challenge for me after thirty nine years in the printing trade and was not something I had done before. I was now opening business bank accounts, constructing business plans, marketing myself, dealing with the tax man, organising personal liability insurance and CRB checks for myself, everything was new to me. Attending Business link courses and speaking to other self employed people gave me the confidence to 'go for it'.

Then 'bang'!!!! Six months into my 'new life' another disaster strikes, the company Marlena worked for had a restructure and closed her department - consequently she lost her job. As her salary was our 'buffer' this was another turning point.....could I carry on as an Instructor and cover our outgoings? Well, with lots of hard work, sacrifices and cutbacks, lots of marketing and pushing for work by me and Marlena, who was now my unpaid, overworked P.A., slowly work started to trickle in. Despite government cutbacks, I am hopeful I can continue doing something I love and bring the benefits of good health to the students I teach.

As any self-employed person will tell you, working for yourself is not easy, there's lots of red tape, dealing with tax, national insurance, insurances and paper work is no fun. Although I will probably never become rich as a Tai Chi instructor, as there is a lot of competition out there, the rewards are you meet lots of interesting friendly people and you can help to improve their health and fitness. Especially rewarding are the 'Painting the Rainbow' classes where people with various disabilities always give 100%, they can be a true inspiration.

If you are just starting your Tai Chi journey you may find that, like me, it may well change your life. It has given me the inner strength to cope with a myriad of life problems and bounce back stronger than before. Sometimes decisions are made for you which you cannot control and you then have to step off one path, make a brave decision, and try a new



course. I have left the hot, sweaty, smelly world of print and moved on to a path that feels more aligned to my inner destiny.....that being helping people improve their wellbeing which for me, along with the many new friends, both instructors and students, I have made, is rich reward indeed. I hope your Tai Chi journey is equally as good.

Neil Rankine  
Instructor



## THE HISTORY OF BOADING BALLS

We have all seen those nicely presented boxes containing a duo of small metal balls painted or enamelled with attractive designs, very often the Yin and Yang symbols or Dragons etc and many give off a very pleasant “chime” as you roll them around in the palm of your hand. But do you know they are called Boading balls or the history of their origin? If you don’t then read on for enlightenment. Today they are more still popular, riding the wave of Feng Shui popularity. Boading balls are said to be one of the 3 treasures of Boading City (no one ever says what the other two are). Known as the South Gate of Beijing, it lies smack in the centre of a golden triangle formed by huge metropolises of Beijing, Tianjin and Shijiazhuang. Although iron balls go back to the Song Dynasty (960-1127 CE), according to legend, it was a Boading blacksmith in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) that first created the chime-filled balls as instructed by the gods in a dream. Thus Boading laid claim to all balls, chime filled or not. The Emperor was so impressed that he commissioned these balls exclusively for the imperial family. It was much later when they fell into the hands of us commoners! Now you can’t find a Chinatown shop that lacks these balls anywhere.

Using Boading balls is very simple. Just spin the balls in your palm. If you really want to show your skill, don’t let the balls touch!!!.Or you can just rub the balls together constantly. If you become skilled with 2 balls it is suggested you advance to spinning up to 5 balls at a time.

There is even a unique form of contact juggling today using these balls, most notably demonstrated by artist Michael Moschen in the 1986 film LABYRINTH starring David Bowie and Jennifer Connelly.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, spinning Boading balls stimulates many significant acupressure points within the hand, helping relieve all sorts of maladies believed to be due to “improper qi” flow.

Today this has been translated into a panacea for everything from high blood pressure, carpal tunnel syndrome, warding off the common cold! And the soothing chime is marketed in this age of stress as an anxiety reliever.

As a testament to its health giving virtues, the average lifespan of a Boading citizen is 6.4 years longer than the rest of China. The balls can come in many forms, solid metal, cloisonné, crystal and some even made from jade and other semi-precious stones.

And this is a case where size matters!!! Small ones are for multiple ball spinning while big ones are for big fat hands.

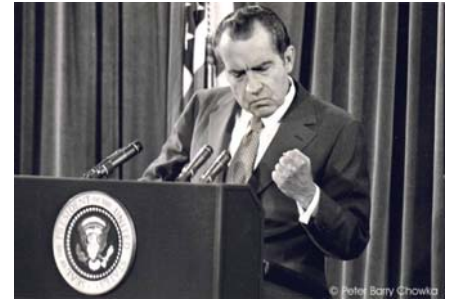
As they come in pairs they were also sometimes given as a lucky wedding gift. So why it is also regarded as a weapon? Chinese used to carry Boading balls all the time.

Imagine being hit in the face. This alone was enough to justify their inclusion in the classical Chinese lists of throwing weapons.

So now you know the facts surrounding these balls maybe the next time you see them you might be tempted to buy a pair to sit and spin whilst watching the telly eating a slice of chocolate cake but justifying it by spinning your balls to improve your health!!! And if anyone says otherwise stick to your story!



Here is a little story to amuse——



“In 1972, the Chinese presented President Nixon (they did it to Regan too) with Boading balls as a quaint “cultural exchange” gift. It was a simple ploy. Give the “gift” then sit back and watch as he struggled to maintain presidential dignity, fumbling with his balls at the dinner table. Of course, any Chinese dignitary can whip his balls about like there’s no tomorrow Ball spinning is a common skill amongst Chinese.

Nothing like iron balls to cool down cold war diplomacy”



## THE QUIET CORNER

### Open Mind (Kai Ming)

The mind is like a parachute - it works best when it is open.

How quickly we make assumptions, jump to conclusions and close our mind. How easily we form and hold fast to our opinions and then close our mind. How fast do we make a judgement, slap on a label and then close our mind.

A closed mind never knows the delight of playing with possibilities, being enlightened by others point of view or enjoying the diversity of human life.

An open and understanding mind never assumes, doesn’t jump to conclusions and won’t hold fast to any opinion.

Perhaps it is no wonder a closed mind is not a very relaxed mind.

Supplied by David Jones,  
Lichfield Instructor

**This years Christmas Party will be at Tin-Tin's Chinese restaurant, Brindley Place, Birmingham. B1 2HL on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December.**

Last year was extremely well received with the new management increasing the quality of the already excellent food. Last year we tried out their new format of set Christmas meal served on a traditional rotating table centre and each table was amazed at the sheer volume of food supplied. The only hiccup was that due to the special vegetarian option they put together just for our club, vegetarians had to sit on separate tables so that vegi and meat foods would not mix. This did mean that friends couldn't always sit together....

This year we have opted for a buffet which will enable table arrangements to be a little more free flowing.

The menu is below and will be £25 per head for both Kai Ming members and non-members, friends and family. Please get your £10 per person deposits in now and full payments no later than 10<sup>th</sup> December.

It is always a fantastic evening of eating, drinking and karaoke! The more the merrier so invite friends, work-mates and anyone you can think of.



### **Buffet Menu £25 per person**

#### **Starter**

- Vegetarian Spring rolls (v)
- Vegetarian Curry Samosa (v)
- Salad Bowl (v)
- Salt & Pepper bean curd with chilli (v)
- Chicken Skewers with Satay sauce
- Prawn Toast
- Salt & Pepper chicken wings with chilli sauce
- Crispy Fortune Parcel with Chicken and Shitake
- Spicy muscles

#### **Main Course**

- Stir Fried Aubergine in Black Bean sauce (v)
- Mixed Vegetables with Cashew Nuts in Yellow Bean sauce (v)
- Deep fried Broccoli with Sweet and Sour Sauce (v)
- Roast Ducj with Hoi Sin Sauce
- Szechwan Pepper Chicken
- Thai Beef with Sweet Chilli
- Thai red Curry Sea food
- Deep Friend King Prawns with sweet and sour sauce
- Pork Loin Cantonese style

#### **Side Dishes**

- Stir Fried Singapore Vermicelli (v)
- Egg Fried Rice (v)
- Stir Fried Noodles with Bean Sprouts

#### **To follow**

- Tea & coffee.
- Ice Cream is included for anybody wanting it.

Please book your places as soon as possible to enable us to secure a large section of the restaurant just for our tai chi group. If you have any questions or specific dietary needs please contact Jenny & Mark on 0121 251 6172 or email [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)

## **Training dates for 2012**

The dates below are for the advanced Sunday morning training sessions and will be 9.30am to 12.30pm (3 hours). The cost will be **£30 per session**.

Each month there will be a different focus to enable you to take your training beyond the limits of normal weekly classes; details will be in the December issue of the newsletter. Areas covered will include San Shou, Tui-shou (push-hands), advanced form instruction, weapons, Chin-Na (locks) etc.

As usual, for Instructors and those wishing to train as instructors you will need to attend a minimum of 8 out of the 10 sessions. The weekend can count as 2 if attending both days.

If you have any particular areas of study you'd like to develop on the advanced Sunday sessions or at the weekend camp please let Mark know my email at [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)

Sunday sessions are by invitation only so please ask your instructor, if you are interested, to assess your suitability.

- 15<sup>th</sup> January
- 12<sup>th</sup> February
- 11<sup>th</sup> March
- 22<sup>nd</sup> April
- 20<sup>th</sup> May
- 24<sup>th</sup> June
- 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> July Tai Chi weekend camp
- 9<sup>th</sup> September
- 21<sup>st</sup> October
- 18<sup>th</sup> November
- 9<sup>th</sup> December – grading day

We are not planning any other workshops in 2012



**for details of our house in France visit [www.frenchdream.co.uk](http://www.frenchdream.co.uk)**

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