



Newsletter

First Visit of Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing

In a recent article in the American Kung Fu & Tai Chi magazine, Chen Xiaoxing was described as China's last village grandmaster. China is a huge place with a great martial tradition so this might be overstating things a little; however, it does reflect his reputation as a genuinely traditional teacher.



We first met Chen Xiaoxing briefly, in Chenjiagou in 1997. In November 2003 we led the first British group to train intensively with him in Chenjiagou. Since then members of the school have trained with him annually. Many people drop by the village just to take photos during their holidays in China. Even today relatively few actually stay in the village and train.

October 2010

Chen Xiaoxing loves the simple village life and does not leave very often, so it was a great coup to get him to come over to Europe for the first time. His seminars were held in 3 locations: ours in Manchester/Warrington; In Bristol organised by Ben Milton's Bristol School of Tai Chi and in Warsaw, Poland organised by local Chen Taijiquan teacher Marek Balinski.

Chen Xiaowang, Chen Xiaoxing's older brother, sometimes reminisces how their teacher Chen Zhaopi would sit quietly watching as they repeatedly practised a particular movement. He would then make individual corrections appropriate to the student. This is very much Chen Xiaoxing's approach. First he shows a movement or a short sequence. Then allows the students to train by themselves to try to replicate the movements.

People who do not understand traditional training do not value this approach. In a recent report on a seminar conducted by another Chen teacher in America, students enthused that, as well as going through the Laojia Yilu form a couple of times in the morning and afternoon, the teacher also taught



At the end of the sword workshop

the entire sword form to a group new to the form in a single day! Next day they were to learn the New Frame Cannon Fist! This might be entertaining, but it is a million miles from traditional training. Training privately with Chen Xiaoxing, it is quite normal to take a single movement and work on it for hours.



During his time with us Chen Xiaoxing conducted workshops on Reeling Silk and Standing Pole – the fundamentals of Chen Taijiquan; Old Frame First Form; Sword and Push Hands. Training with him you often hear his expression of “grinding out skill” through training. After the seminar in Bristol he asked the group if everyone was tired, and before anyone could reply said, “if you’re not tired, you’re not training hard enough”. This is the traditional approach!

Thank You!!!!!!!

We’d like to give a big thank you to those who helped in different ways during the seminars. Thanks Mary (Johnson) for opening up your home for the foreign visitors. They were overwhelmed by the way you looked after them during their stay. Thanks also to Tim, Allan, Clive and Mary (Mc) for keeping the classes going. Thanks Andrew for the early morning airport runs. Last but not least, thank you all for supporting the seminars!

How much do you know about the art you are practising?

At each stage of a person’s Taiji development different things need to be considered. In the beginning you don’t need to look much past learning the choreography of the form and understanding very basic requirements. However, if you want to improve, your focus must change as your level goes up. We recently had a test to gauge the level of student’s knowledge of the basic history, philosophy and training theory of Chen Taiji.

The test was not designed to trick or humiliate, but to highlight areas that need to be improved. The level of knowledge required varies depending upon the goals of a student. People who are, or wish to be instructors, obviously should be aiming to score very highly.

In the early nineties I was training Shaolin Nam Pai Chuan, a gongfu system with roots in Malaysia and China. During an instructors’ training course with one of the leading masters of the system, we were lectured on the importance of understanding the history of the art we were practising. Without knowing this it is impossible to appreciate how you fit into the tradition. As a senior student or instructor you really should know who created the system and at least the major changes and significant individuals from previous generations.

Likewise with the fundamental training theories – if your goal is to come to class for the exercise benefits, you don’t need to go too deeply. But, if you are an instructor or senior student of Chen Taijiquan GB, you must understand fundamental concepts such as the 3 external and internal harmonies, basic energies etc.

The winner of the first Theory & Philosophy test was Richy McCarthy from

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit” - Aristotle

the Flixton class. Richy scored an impressive 82%, making him a clear winner – Well done Richy!!! His prize is a book from the school's suggested reading list. In second and third place were Allan Aldridge and Tim Drummond. We hope to make this theory test an annual event so get reading!



Not just a bruiser! Richy McCarthy (rt), winner of the Theory & Philosophy test.

Breast Cancer Fundraising

On 25 July '10, Taiji instructors across the country ran a multi-location Taiji lesson. All proceeds going to breast cancer research. Lee Davis-Conchie, instructor of the school's branch in Blackpool organised a mammoth Taiji session with over 60 participants taking part. They raised a fantastic £938... Great job!



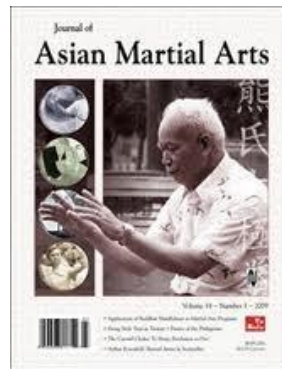
Check out the school's pages at:

Facebook - Chenjiagou Taijiquan GB
Chen Taijiquan World

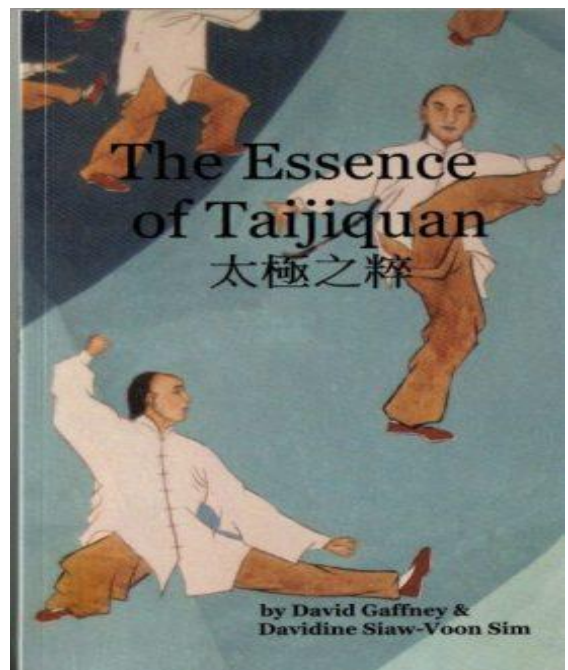
www.squidoo.com/chentaijiquan

www.chentaijigb.co.uk

The Essence of Taijiquan



Watch out for the upcoming review of David & Davidine's new book 'The Essence of Taijiquan' in next month's Journal of Asian Martial Arts.



If you haven't got a copy yet you can order it in class
Price: £14.99

Advanced Training Sessions

There will be a monthly 4 hour training session for people wanting to deepen their training in some of the aspects of Chen Taijiquan we don't get to cover in day to day classes: weapons including the spear & guandao, long pole training, 42 Fajin, Taiji Bang, push hands & applications, Yijinjing Qigong etc. This will be on the last Sunday of each month, beginning in January 2011. Full details to follow soon...



China Advanced Training Trip – October 2011



2009 group visiting the Chen Family Temple

The date is set (14-30 Oct) for next year's training trip to the Chen Village (Chenjiagou) in China. Chenjiagou is the place where Taijiquan was created nearly 400 years ago. Training will be overseen by Chen Xiaoxing, Principal of the Chenjiagou Taijiquan School.



This is a fantastic opportunity to experience Taijiquan at its most authentic. Those who go are sure to make a quantum leap. As usual, the group size will be limited so that everyone gets lots of corrections from Grandmaster Chen. We need to know exactly how many people are coming so that rooms can be booked in the school. So let us know if you will be joining the trip.



Entrance to the Chenjiagou Taijiquan School

Grange Taiji Weekend 2011

Next year's residential weekend at the Grange Country House in Shropshire will be on 13-15th May. This will be the eighth annual visit and the Grange really has become an enjoyable and much anticipated part of the school's programme.



As well as the customary early morning Taiji form practice, topics will include review of the Jibengong (Foundation Exercise) as taught by Chen Ziqiang and the Sabre (Broadsword) form. There will also be a choice of form correction and push hands session. Places are already nearly full, so if you want to join the weekend let us know asap (deposit £30 please).



Taiji Around the World!



The Bloodworth family trained in the early Culcheth class, here playing Taiji at Mellon Udrigal Beach – Scotland.

Now living in Sweden and still practising Taiji!