

Chenjiagou Taijiquan GB Newsletter

November 2011
Volume 1, Issue 2



Training in China!

Fourteen people - the largest group yet from our school - travelled to Chenjiagou, the birthplace of Taijiquan, in China's Henan province to train with Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing. We were joined by Seattle based Taiji instructor Kim Ivy. This was a fantastic opportunity to train with a teacher who has been described as "the last village grandmaster".

Chen Xiaoxing's approach is to fix an outstanding foundation within the student through a seemingly unending emphasis upon basic drills. If you judge a teacher by his students, then no one has produced more high-calibre practitioners than Chen Xiaoxing.

We trained with him in a second floor room overlooking the main street of Chenjiagou. Through the sessions you could hear the bustling noises of village life. Training for ten days, with each day divided into two sessions of two and a half hours. The format was the same for every session - first standing pole for thirty minutes with Chen Xiaoxing carefully adjusting the postures of each student - always sitting back more, always a little deeper. No matter how many times you go back, this method is the same.

For the following thirty or forty minutes he would have the group train a single reeling silk exercise, while he walked around the group moving each person as closely through the correct movement path as their body would allow. To maintain the correct movement track requires great leg strength which must be developed slowly over time.

Finally we would move onto a short

section of the form. First Chen Xiaoxing demonstrated and explained some important points. Then each person got up and performed the movements under his watchful eye. This was nerve-wracking for some who have never had to do the form individually, but everybody acquitted themselves well and grew in confidence as the sessions progressed.

During our time in the village, our group was featured on two different TV programmes; one by Henan province's CCTV5 channel and another by the local Wenxian TV channel, that did a feature on the English group travelling to Chenjiagou to train at the source of Taijiquan.



Chen Wangting by Janet Grimes

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Laojia - Sunday Workshop
- ◆ Taiji at the Grange
- ◆ Masters From China



Statue in the Chenjiagou Taijiquan Museum drawn by Colin Grimes .

Impressions of Training in Chenjiagou

Training in the place where Taijiquan began almost 400 years ago allows students to taste the history of the system. Visiting the Chen Family Temple and the Chenjiagou Taijiquan Museum we read about the many luminaries from past generations of Chen Taijiquan masters—some famous as warriors, merchant bodyguards and guardians of the system through dark days of persecution.

Below are the thoughts of some of our group on their experience in Chenjiagou:

“Living and training in the village allowed me to experience the culture and everyday life of the community and school and has put the Chen style heritage and history firmly in context. The positive impact of sustained intensive training with such an excellent teacher as Chen Xiao Xing cannot be underestimated; my posture, understanding and physical and mental conditioning have improved significantly during my 10 day visit to the village”.

- **Allan Aldridge**

“For me it was a spectacular training adventure. From the first rooster call at 4am, to watching the dawn school workout on the balcony drinking tea with my mates, to the deep, rich and generous instruction from our teacher Chen Xiaoxing, it simply could not have been more rewarding”.

- **Kim Ivy**

“Chenjiagou Village was an extreme enlightenment. A great leap back in time. A revelation of the past, the present and unknown future. I left with a desired wish for its survival”.

- **Mary Johnston**

“A fantastic experience, a feeling of calmness came over me on arrival. The patience of Chen Xiaoxing whilst teaching, the feeling of learning and improving without being under pressure. My own increase in the desire to learn more about Taiji and improve in my own practice. A feeling of stepping back in time to life when I was young, not having much, but making the most of what I had”.

- **Clive Howells**

“Rural village life provides many distractions from intense training. All

manner of vehicles pass along the street below – horns honking. Music over loudspeakers punctuate the school day. Sparrows chirrup. Children chatter and scamper, their instructor shouts commands. Strange customs, smells, language and food. We are the strangers, objects of curiosity, but smile and they grin back. And - I will die before I eat donkey, turtle or sea cucumber”!

- **Mary McGregor**

“Inspirational training in homeland of Chen style Taiji – with patient Laoshi and no outside distractions...Amazing country. From Buddhas to the bustle of Beijing - Eating (the Water Feast) and local fresh produce. An experience not to be missed”.

- **Yvonne Hall**

“People in England think they are poor if they have no 38” TV or computer etc. They need to come to China’s Chen Village to see poverty. Yet still the people here are wonderful full of energy and life. I shall remember them always”.

- **Carole Howells**

“Chen Xiaoxing claps his hands and its time to relax... Chen Xiaoxing has his own sound for relaxing the kua, letting the qi go down. It’s a strong deep breath out. He also has a sound for using your energy to make a posture large, for stepping up, for swooping the arms. I like to listen to him breathing out in the more explosive style releasing the energy to strike”.

- **Lynne Maxfield**

A Chenjiagou haiku – “Dawn. Man spreads his soya beans on the road to dry. Commuters adapt, wu wei”.

- **Crawford Currie**



The next school training trip to Chenjiagou will be in October 2013!



Slovenia Workshop

From 30th September to 3rd October David conducted a workshop in Ljubljana, the picturesque capital of Slovenia. The workshop was hosted by Biljana Dusic, Slovenia representative of the WCTA. An enthusiastic group of students were taken through sessions covering Jibengong - Foundation training, Laojia Yilu (Old Frame First Routine) and an introduction to Laojia Erlu (Old Frame Second Routine).

The foundation training workshop focused upon: Zhan Zhuang or Standing Pole, Taijiquan's fundamental method for establishing the correct body structure and energetic state -top of the head lifted up lightly, weight sinking down, posture expanded

outwards; silk reeling exercises - working to maintain the correct postural and energetic states in movement; and an introduction to the eight core energies of Taijiquan - peng, lu, ji, an etc...

The Laojia Yilu workshop involved working slowly through the whole routine. Holding postures to "fix the frame" was hard work with Ljubljana going through a heatwave at the time of the workshops! Finally a smaller group was taken through the first section of the Cannon Fist Form.

Thanks to all the guys in Slovenia for making me so welcome!



Some of the Slovenian participants

Taiji in the Park

Lee Davis-Conchie's Blackpool group was recently featured in the Blackpool Gazette newspaper. Their monthly "Taiji in the Park" sessions in Stanley Park have continued to grow in popularity. Now each participant pays a small fee and the takings are donated to different local charities - well done to the Blackpool crew!



Standardising the Laojia Yilu

We have been travelling to China to train with Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing since 2003. With so many students from the school making the trip to Chenjiagou over the years, especially this year, we feel that now is the right time to standardise the Old Frame form taught in the UK classes with those in Chenjiagou. So, over the next few months we will be working intensively in every class to achieve this. Many of the changes are simply connecting movements or reducing a circle. Some, changing the height and direction. Only a few are different. To really know the form it is important to be flexible and comfortable with the different variations.



Image of the Head on Cannon Posture from the Laojia Yilu form - Chen Family Temple

November 27th - Laojia Yilu Workshop

The topic of the Sunday workshop on 27th November will now be the Foundation form Laojia Yilu. The workshop will be held in the Croft Memorial Hall (where we did the sword workshop). Book your place in class. Time 10am-2pm. Cost £25





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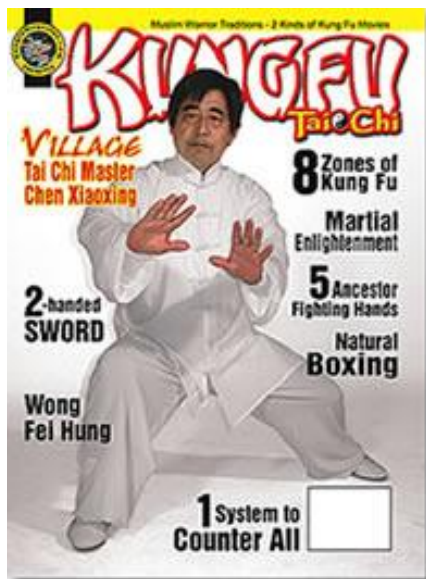
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Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing

The Grange Taiji Residential Weekend

We have been going to the Grange Country House in Shropshire for our annual Taiji residential weekend for almost a decade now. With its continuing and growing popularity, in 2012 for the first time we will be running 2 weekends. The first on 18-20th May, the second on 25-27th May. The programme for both weekends will be an introduction to the Xinjia or New Frame of Chen Taijiquan. This form was devised by the famous 17th Generation Master Chen Fake.

The first weekend is now fully booked, but there are still some places on the second weekend. Ask in class for details.



2012 Seminars with Masters from China

In the coming year our school will again be hosting some fantastic workshops with two of the best teachers from Chenjiagou:

In July, Chen Ziqiang will be returning for the third year. Those who have trained with him know that this will be a dynamic and challenging workshop. Chen Ziqiang is the Chief Coach of the Chenjiagou Taijiquan School. At about 35 years of age, he already has about 33 years training experience! Following in the family tradition, he began learning Taijiquan almost as soon as he could walk! Today, as well as being a renowned competitor (China National Champion) - he is responsible for the day-to-day training in the main Taiji school in Chenjiagou.

In September his father Chen Xiaoxing will be visiting us. This really is a great opportunity to learn from one of the most accomplished masters of Chen Taijiquan. Chen Xiaoxing is the teacher we train with in China. His skill as a teacher is obvious when you look at the students he has produced, with many of the best of the new generations of practitioners having gone through his hands. Practitioners like his son Chen

Ziqiang; Chen Bing, currently in Beijing filming the life story of Chen Wangting - creator of Taijiquan; Chen Jun - eldest son of Chen Xiaowang etc... all owe their skill to the teaching of Chen Xiaoxing. It is only in the last few years that he has travelled out from Chenjiagou, generally preferring to stay in the village and teach in the traditional way.

Both of these seminars are organised by our school. The mission of our school is to promote traditional Chen Village Taijiquan and it does not get any more authentic than this. Put these events in your dairies as everyone's support makes them possible. Exact dates and programmes to come. For those who have not had the opportunity to go to Chenjiagou - Chenjiagou is coming to you!



Chief coach Chen Ziqiang

Follow our blog “Talking Chen Taijiquan with David Gaffney” at
<http://chentaijiquanworld.blogspot.com>