

Aikido Times

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH AIKIDO BOARD



November 2019



Welcome to the autumn issue of the Aikido Times.

At last we enter that time of year where traditionally our classes start to pick up and we get more new blood into our dojos.

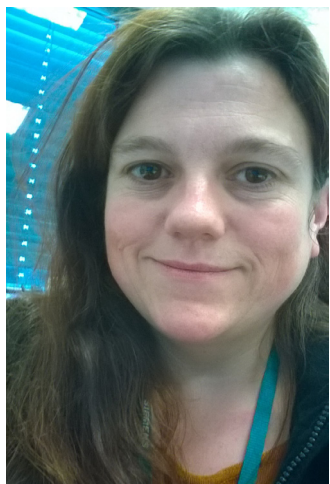
Thanks to everyone who sent in their last minute articles and pictures. Please spread the word and ask around your clubs to see if anyone has something to contribute.

Remember that this is your publication so please share your dojo news!

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The BAB welcomes its new Director



My name is Kerry Cope and I love Aikido!

I have recently joined the British Aikido Board as their Director, and I am looking forward to the challenges that lay ahead.

I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself to you all and to share why I love Aikido as well as why it is important that we all work together to encourage others to try this humbling martial art.

I grew up in Germany owing to my father being in the army before making Wales my home. My father held a Dan grade in Karate and my brother belts in Judo. I would often watch friends during Taekwondo classes that they attended and I loved watching martial arts films with my father on a Saturday afternoon (should I really have admitted to that?). Back then growing up I really lacked the confidence to just turn up at a martial arts dojo and train. As a teenager I put my thoughts of martial arts to one side and focused on securing an apprenticeship as a metal machinist for an engineering company.

I always knew that I wanted to try a martial art that I thought would suit my analytical mind, spiritual ways, would allow me to defend myself and was without competitions. I also knew that the thought of getting my leg to the heights attained by students of kicking arts was never going to happen, seriously!



I remember watching the film Nico and thinking wow! An effortless martial art with elegance and yet effective, what could it be? I know not everyone is a Steve Seagal fan but certainly he helped to showcase Aikido in the mainstream arena.

I was in my late 20's when I finally thought to myself; if you want to learn a martial art you better get off your backside and start training. I did some research into Aikido and made my first contact with Shirley Timms (Secretary to the BAB) and she kindly forwarded me details of local clubs. My first club experience of Aikido wasn't suited to me, and it is important that you feel comfortable with the club you choose.

I then heard of a club in Newport, which at the time was close to where I worked. It was then that I began training with Sensei Steven Lindsey an experienced Aikido teacher with a lifetime in Aikido. The club was everything that I was looking for and everyone shared the same passion for Aikido. I really typified a new beginner with frequent shouts of "the other left" being directed at me. I think it took me about 3 years before I went from feeling completely useless to seeing progress in my training. One of the worst training times I experienced was when I broke my collar bone whilst rolling. What hurt the most wasn't the break it was not being able to train and I knew then Aikido was with me for the rest of my life. I have been training for about 11 years now, co-run a club with my instructor Sensei Andrew Reakes, and my love of Aikido remains a constant.



Aikido means so many different things to so many people. For some it is a self defence, others a spiritual path, some seeking health benefits and others love the social interaction. What is clear is that no matter what our differences we share a common love for Aikido and whatever that means to us.

The number of people practicing traditional martial arts including Aikido is declining in favour of newer systems such as Krav and MMA as well as the range of other demands on our time.

My role as Director is not a standalone role and it relies on the BAB executive committee, associations, clubs, and members all working together.

The goal we share is a common one: preserve Aikido and encourage the next generation of Aikido students through our shared passion for Aikido.

I will be working to support the BAB executive committee, look at ways the BAB can add value for the associations that it represents and try to get Aikido the recognition that it deserves.

If there are courses running see them as opportunities to come together to train, If a community event is running offer to demonstrate Aikido, Share the Aikido Times with others and don't be shy with sharing your Aikido

I need you all to be ambassadors for Aikido.

I am humbled to be able to practice Aikido, and I am looking forward to working with and supporting you within my role.

Thanks

Kerry

Junior Report from the National Course



On Saturday, the 28th of September, along with members of the Chingford Tomiki Aikido Club, I went to the British Aikido Board's National Course at Brunel University. I arrived at the campus with my father and it took a couple of minutes to fill out all the paperwork. Afterwards, I received a black armband because I was an under-eighteen, which - interestingly enough - seemed to be very reluctant to peel itself off of my gi afterwards!

Armband stickiness aside, I entered the main hall and started to read my book as I waited for the course to start. I was quite nervous as I hadn't seen anyone who looked around my age, but all the adults seemed to be friendly enough; they were all talking intently and laughing.

The warm up started and everyone swarmed over to the mat. Naturally, I followed - slightly sleepy and wishing I'd eaten more breakfast that morning. That was not a very good idea on my part, now that I know what I had to go through.

First we did rolling break falls (mae-ukemi). It was worse for me than you might think. All of the adults were rolling effortlessly, and there was me, dazed and a little dizzy - unsurprisingly, I needed to sit out. But after five minutes, I was back at it again, doing burpees, jogging and squatting repeatedly.

During the course, we learnt about five different styles of aikido from the senseis at the front. My personal favourite of all of them (apart from the Tomiki style I

learn) was ki aikido, and I found the style and flow of the techniques very interesting. Some of the ideas surprised me a little, such as the idea of yielding to the uke, but I found that it worked very well and was also useful for catching your opponent off guard. Bonus - you don't need to be strong to do it!

To practise the techniques, we paired up and practiced with others. I was probably the only one there who was shocked at the amount of dan grades. There were more black belts at the course than any other belt!

And the juniors I was looking for earlier... well, I was the only under-eighteen there. True, it was a little lonely, but also fun. It feels good to be unique. Hopefully I won't be the only junior there next year!

I would definitely recommend this to everyone who studies aikido. It's a great opportunity to get involved in aikido, learn new techniques to further one's learning and to make friends! I met so many new people and it was so much fun.

I loved it!

Lauren

14 years old, Aikido Development Society, Junior 6th Kyu



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. Maximum article length will usually be in the region of 1000 words. It may be necessary to split some articles over more than one issue of the Newsletter.
2. No payment shall be made for items used.
3. The focus of articles must be on aikido, its impact on people and the community, or contain content which would be of interest and relevance to aikidoka
4. Contributors must be either members of the BAB or be invited to contribute. Other people may submit items for publication and approval from the Board's Executive may be required.
5. There should be no explicit criticism of individuals or other associations/organisations.
6. All material submitted must be original (i.e. not breach copyright laws). Appropriate credits and permissions should be included within the submission if relevant.
7. Articles may be edited/corrected at the Editor's discretion
8. The Editor's decision shall be final in determining the content of The Aikido Times.

WHEN SUBMITTING ARTICLES: wherever possible send photographs or illustrations to accompany the text

Report from the National Course

Michelle Brailey, Tenchi Ryu (Devon)



I attended my first BAB Seminar in September having only been learning Aikido for 5 months - literally earning my yellow belt just the week before! I wasn't sure I had made the right decision to go at such an early stage but I had the support of those from my class and I knew if I felt like a little fish drowning I could sit out and observe and learn through watching. Either way it would be and was quite an experience. Certainly an eye opener, I loved it.

Don't get me wrong I had no idea what to expect, what would be waiting for me in this hall and it was extremely daunting surrounded by all levels and later witnessing various versions of Aikido, but I knew that I had to just throw myself in and see what happens and just grab anyone who would train with me – that part was scary, I didn't know these people and they didn't know me. However, everyone was as supportive as the next, regardless of level and ability; after all we were each learning from various schools and the ways in which they teach Aikido and it was genuinely good fun.

I picked up some techniques better than others and it soon became clear that Aikido is never ending, from posture, to techniques, to adaptations and making it work for you. I have so much to learn there is no denying it and I certainly have a long way to go which is actually encouraging as I have barely scratched the surface!

Some techniques seemed just seamlessly simple and yet they were so effective. Some seemed to be more complicated and took me a while to get the hang of, but the guys I went with were a great support and checked in every so often if they could see I was looking confused, usually with a laughter and a shove to just go for it – so I did just that and got stuck in.

There was a lot support around the room too offering tips and guidance if they could see anyone struggling with a particular technique, was me a few times I can tell you.

An amazing experience, if you haven't been at least once I would recommend you do even if just for the experience and insight into other schools. I left with quite a few bruises and my body was absolutely knackered and seriously put through its paces, but I am already wanting to go back next year especially as I will then have a lot more experience under my belt (no pun intended).



Report from Executive Committee

Keith Holland Chairman

1. Coaching

The Committee were pleased to note that the current coach levels comply with the requirements stipulated by the Insurers.

As a result of a general review of the Coaching Courses available welcomed the robustness of the current CL1 course and agreed that it should remain as a 2 day face to face course.

However it was agreed that CL2 and CL3 should be reviewed to see if a blended learning approach was possible utilising a combination of online modules, different forms of assessment and face to face learning.

An online DBS verification module was created previously as a pilot to test the available software and it was agreed that a further on-line model should now be tested.

2. Equality & Equity Policy

Amendments to the current policy have been approved to ensure that the Board remains in compliance with current legislative requirements in relation to transgender participants in Aikido.

3. Aikido Development Plan.

The Committee approved the draft Plan for the period 2019-2024 taking into consideration the 180 plus comments submitted at the AGM Brainstorming exercise, suggestions from the Committee and previously agreed targets.

Recognising that the Plan must be kept to a manageable size, the Committee initially agreed 51 targets and now need to identify available resources to move targets forward and to allocate priorities.

4. New Director

Kerry Cope has now been in post since the beginning of July and is already making an impact on the work of the Board, both through her direct support to Officers and Members and to the development of a range of new initiatives particularly relating to marketing, financial opportunities and IT systems, particularly on the electronic storage of documents.

5. Website

Following the decision to completely remove the old site to make it more user friendly and meet current requirements, work has been progressing on building the new site. Work on programming the encryption of the BAB data on the new website to fully comply with the Data Protection Act is nearing completion and is in the testing phase. Hopefully after the school half term, the main BAB website will go under construction and the new site will slowly appear.

Photographs from the last 2 National Courses and those offered by Association Aikido for Daily Life will be used on the new site. If you have any very good photos of your styles and want them included now is the time to send them to webmaster@bab.org.uk.

Once the new site is stable we will then start on the new BAB Direct membership system.

Attending an Aikido course provides a lovely opportunity to train with people with whom you have perhaps not trained before. It also provides an opportunity to learn from instructors demonstrating various styles of Aikido.

The British Aikido Board National course took place on Saturday the 28th September 2019. A blue sky and crisp morning greeted those attending Brunel University, which was chosen as the venue once again for the National Course.

There is always a nice buzz surrounding the National Course as people attend from all over the country. The cohort I travelled with coming from South Wales, other groups travelled from Devon and as far up as Newcastle.

A well staffed registration team greeted those upon arrival in to the sports hall. A flurry of people going to the changing rooms, Gi suited bodies hurrying to the training hall and others taking the opportunity to catch up with friends that they perhaps only see on courses throughout the year.

The programme for the day covered a range of styles and a last minute instructor substitution.

An energetic warm up commenced the day's busy programme, as rosy hue faces started to populate the mat.

Sensei Steve Trout 4th Dan (Aikido Development Society) was the first instructor to demonstrate to the enthusiastic group. Rather than looking at techniques his approach was to look at the various grips and hand positions from Ai Hanmi and Gyoku Hanmi (Please forgive me reverting to terminology that I am familiar with). The mat was awash with contorted grips and grabs. Sensei Steve Trout certainly got the group thinking!

Sensei Jon Grey Stokoe 6th Dan (Shin Gi Tai) was next to take to the mat and again the group were put through their paces. A lovely mixture of techniques was demonstrated, including the unusual inside turn defence that seems to be a classic hallmark of Shin Gi Tai. The group seemed very receptive to trying the familiar and perhaps the not so familiar aspects of Aikido demonstrated by each instructor.



Sensei Marill Poole 7th Dan (UK Shinwakai Aikido) was then the last instructor to take to the mat and conclude the morning sessions. Sensei Marill Poole had kindly stepped in at the last minute owing to illness befalling the scheduled instructor. Sensei Marill Poole brought an almost mythical edge to her demonstrations and you couldn't help but be captivated by the lovely gentle and yet effective techniques shown.

The lunch break was then an opportunity to get a well deserved breath of fresh air, take a look at the Nine Circles shop in the foyer and re fuel ready for the afternoon sessions.

Getting back on the mat after a lunch break is always a challenge! Once everyone did their own warm ups we were all back in the swing of things.

Sensei James Hall 4th Dan (British Aikido Yoshinkan) was the first instructor up after lunch. Everyone embraced the formal Yoshinkan techniques demonstrated. It was clear that Yoshinkan as a style was fairly unexplored previously by most people attending the course. Sensei James Hall provided clear explanations and allowed everyone to share in his passion for Yoshinkan.



Last up on the mat was Sensei Piers Cooke 7th Dan (Aikido for Daily Life). His demonstration certainly provided the lovely wind down that everyone craved. Beautiful flowing Aikido and Ki tests helped everyone explore the relationship between Uke and Tori. Observing how a relaxed body is a powerful tool. Sensei Piers Cooke displaying the inclusive Aikido that many who has seen him before attribute to his style of teaching.

The National Course concluded with a round of thanks for the organisers, instructors and attendees. The usual photo opportunities were held before everyone helped to collect the mat and finally to say their goodbyes.

DISCLAIMER

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Honesty in Aikido

Quentin Cooke



Honesty may not be the first word you think of in connection with aikido, but on reflection you may come to realise that in fact it is a central pillar.

There are many reasons to train, but for me, the most important reason is to develop myself. I see aikido as a tool to help me grow. It's a road without end, but such a fascinating journey, as the vista is always changing.

As a student, if you are to maximise the opportunity to grow, then you have to cultivate honesty. It is the necessary quality required to understand who you are and where you are at. And to progress, you have to continue to take a good look at yourself, and to be honest about what you see. Honesty is simply the optical tool required to see with 20/20 vision. As the ancient Greek aphorism goes, 'Know thyself'.

To grow into the person you want to be, you simply have to know who you are and where you are at. Having this clear eyed view is essential if you are not to have an over-inflated sense of your own importance or the corollary, an underestimation of your worth. The truth is that we all have qualities to be appreciated, but we also have aspects of character that need to change. Learning to accept who we are is just as important as learning to fully accept an attack from another. In fact, it is the pre-cursor.

Typically your harshest critic is your own inner voice, and for many students that I have met over the years, the biggest benefit of their training has been to silence the enemy within and to gain a clearer insight as to their own worth. So as students, first and foremost, it is your prime responsibility to fix yourself. But it takes courage to really look at yourself in this way, to see the need for change and even more to do something about it.

The more you fix yourself, the better able you are to truly connect with others and in doing so, help them in their own process of self-development. As uke, we are not there to show how good we are. We are not there to find fault in others and neither are we there to bolster the ego of our training partner. Our job is simply to accurately reflect back to nage what is going on with them. We are the mirror they need to clearly see the results of their actions.

If we don't give enough of ourselves or we give too much, we simply fog up the mirror and minimise the learning opportunity. Exploring this boundary is a fascinating aspect of our study, as everyone we train with offers the chance to examine where the borders are. Even with our favourite training partner, no assumptions should be made. The energy they bring having endured a bad day compared to a wonderful one can be quite different. Put simply, every single time we practise with a partner, it is a unique experience filled with possibility. Maximising this opportunity by finding the place that allows both parties to maximise their learning is truly an incredible thing.

It is one of the many dichotomies that we experience in our training, that whilst in the role of uke, our job is to assist the learning of our partner, it also provides a fantastic opportunity to learn so much about ourselves. In fact I would go so far as to say that I have learnt more in this role than I have as nage.

To get it right requires a great deal of sensitivity and the ability to park your ego on the side of the mat. Only then can the riches of aikido unfold and two people for a brief moment in time can effectively become one. It's a magnificent feeling and something that seems to transcend our normal state of being. It is one of the times when I have an understanding of what people are talking about when they describe aikido as a spiritual art.

Cultivating honesty and seeing things as they really are in either role helps us on this upward spiral and anything less just gets in the way and impedes our progress. But if we get it right, it truly is a path of joy!

It does not take a wild leap of understanding to see that when you practise in this way, you will reap the rewards on the mat, but equally you will reap them off it. Whatever roles you take on in life, mother, father, friend or work colleague, you will become better at them. You will become a better member of the communities that you live within and you will better see things as they are. And in a world, where it increasingly feels that we are governed by self-interest and greed, we need more people who we can trust to see things in this way and who have the integrity to bring about the changes that we all need.

Reflecting on this, perhaps you will come to the conclusion that your training is far more meaningful and has more depth than you ever imagined. The stakes are high, but the beauty of cultivating honesty is that the potential rewards are huge. This is how we can make a difference and leave our mark on the world, and play our part on the road to reconciliation.

Finding the spiritual in aikido

Peter Downs 7th Dan Takemusu aikido kai

A long term student recently told me that he felt that our study of aikido was ignoring the spiritual dimension of the art by focussing on the physical practice and asked for specific spiritual instruction. This set me wondering about what we mean by the spiritual element in aikido, how we incorporate it in our practice, and to what end?

Definitions of “spiritual” seem to cover the following elements:

- relating to the human spirit or soul as opposed to material things
- relating to religion or religious belief
- the search for connection with one’s true self and core reality (implying that what appears as everyday reality is not actually “true” reality), otherwise known as “enlightenment”.

The first two of these points simply focus on the meaning of the term. However the final point focusses on the objectives of engaging in a spiritual search and thus seems relevant in considering aikido’s role in this quest.

O sensei clearly was a deeply religious man and started everyday with ritual purification and prayers. According to the history he also had a couple of deeply profound experiences that could be likened to religious ecstasy or enlightenment. Aikido was, in part, a product of these experiences so not necessarily a route to them. Certainly it could be argued that his ascetic discipline and meditative practices were more important in achieving enlightenment. However following these experiences O sensei adapted aikido to his new understanding of things and in that sense it can be argued that aikido both reflects and points the way towards a different way of looking at the world and ourselves.

So what are the spiritual elements of aikido practice? One element of the spiritual search is related to self-improvement, being the best we can be for the short amount of time we are living. Being the best we can be requires us to be mindful of how we interact with the world and each other. Indeed the noble 8 fold path of Buddhism is entirely to do with making judgements about how we perceive and act.

- Right understanding
- Right thought
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right concentration.

Pursuing this path requires constant attention to ourselves, how else will we know whether we are thinking or acting right? The practice of aikido requires similar attention to ourselves in order to ensure that we are embodying the principles of aikido. By that I mean:

- natural and integrated movement from the centre
- relaxed extension
- awareness of our own body
- sensitivity to our partner's movement and balance
- concern for the wellbeing of our training partner
- truthfulness in our role as 'uke'
- disengagement from the ego.

One of the key principles of meditative practice involves observing ourselves and our thoughts. Through this observation we can quieten the mind's constant need to impose its interpretation on events or to separate itself from the present moment by reviewing past events or planning or worrying about future events or simply chuntering on to itself for no real purpose. The quietened mind suspends this activity and presents us with the opportunity of seeing things by direct rather than mediated experience. Some may call this catching a glimpse of true reality.

In the practice of higher levels of aikido we similarly try to simply experience ourselves and our training partners and free our bodies to respond intuitively. In this type of practice we should not try to impose ourselves on our training partner but blend with them and merely guide them along a natural path towards the mat. Our ego makes this a difficult exercise, because it tells us we must get the person onto the ground or otherwise throw them. This causes muscles to tighten, and our intent becomes clear as we try to force our partner in a particular direction. They similarly respond and resist and we end up in a battle of wills and strength. Avoiding this natural tendency to impose ourselves on our training partner requires a high degree of mindfulness. So, in many respects this aspect of aikido training is a meditation in movement and if perceived from the right perspective can be a spiritual practice in itself.

Similarly aikido teaches us that there are alternatives to confrontation and conflict that permit the re-establishment of harmony, rather than the injury or destruction of an aggressor. Action oriented toward injury or destruction involves the ego in so much as it is focussed on an objective at the end of a process. So a harmonious conclusion again requires a suspension of the ego and is therefore another "spiritual practice".

Thus the simple practice of aikido embodies within itself disciplines that support the development of enlightenment, just as certain practices in yoga or in zen support that development. Although aikido can open our minds to different ways of being and of perceiving the world, will the simple practice of aikido alone lead to enlightenment? I suspect

not, unless training is so intense that it switches the mind into a different state. Few train to this level these days. Enlightenment is a personal journey and probably requires a more single-minded approach of regular meditation as evidenced by the fact that many senior masters of aikido do indeed practice meditation as part of their aikido journey.

In answering my student's original comment I would therefore say that the physical practice of aikido can itself be a spiritual exercise providing the practitioner is mindful of that dimension of training. The role of a teacher is to open the mind of the student to this dimension of practice. Beyond that I think it makes sense for the student to practice supplementary techniques. Just as meditation and mindfulness as part of "spiritual" development can enhance one's development in aikido, so too will the physical practice of aikido open up an understanding of the spiritual depth of o'sensei's budo.

Dojo Song 2

Amazing Place

to the tune of *Amazing Grace*

Amazing place, this training-hall,
Not wood but mats as floor;
"Aikido? What is that?" I thought,
As I stepped through the door.
a "This looks rehearsed, how can it work?"
Thought I, so much in doubt;
But how it works, and why it works,
I very soon found out.

The students flew across the mat,
With speed and grace, for sure;
And yet, with grins, they all bounced up
And ran straight back for more.

'Twas really hard, when training first,
Techniques and falls to try -
But through the intervening years
I too have learned to fly!

Marianne Crisp

White Rose Aikikai 40th Anniversary Year.

Part One – Kyoto, Japan

1979 is notable for several things; Pink Floyd released “The Wall”, the movie “Alien” appeared on cinema screens, and a young kyu-grade student of aikido—Shane Riley—started practising together with some like-minded friends. These practise sessions became more frequent, and soon the White Rose Aikikai was born.

Forty years later, Sensei Shane Riley, now seventh dan Shihan, has forged a reputation for himself and for the White Rose, and made friends in the aikido world both in the UK and across the world. In 2019, those friends were invited to join us in celebrating forty years of the White Rose.

Our celebrations began earlier in the year as a more private affair. The White Rose now has classes in Kyoto, and this was a perfect time for Sensei Riley and twenty-nine White Rose aikidoka to visit Kyoto and train with Sensei John Pryce and some of his students.



Of course, we took advantage of the opportunity to see some of the sights of Kyoto, the medieval capital of Japan. We saw Nijo Castle, the Kyoto residence of the Tokugawa shoguns. We walked along the Philosophers’ Path, adorned by the white cherry blossom.

Some of the group got up early to go and stand under a freezing cold waterfall and experience misogi, the Shinto ritual to cleanse mind and body. The rest of us were not so spiritually minded and took the opportunity to have a lie in. As it turned out the spiritual experience was having technical problems and the waterfall had been turned off (apparently it isn’t such a natural feature) so spiritual cleansing would have to wait. The group did, however, have a profound experience while there. They practised tori-fune before walking to shichifuku shiandokoro—literally meaning the “seven fortune thinking place”—where they sat and spent some time in quiet contemplation.

Our first aikido session was in the Kyoto Budo Centre, the modern (built in 1989) martial arts training centre. Aikidoka from the UK mixed with White Rose students from Japan, with a huge age range represented on the mat; the youngest around five years old, and all grades from novice to 7th Dan.

The training started with Sensei Riley taking the first session. Sensei Pryce and Sensei Derrick then each took a session. After a short break for lunch, Sensei Reg Sakamoto and his uke Pavel gave a demonstration of Yoshinkan aikido showing us a range of techniques first with bokken, then with jo, then with empty hand. Sensei Riley took the final session of the class. Like all good things it was over far too quickly but it had been a wonderful opportunity to train with aikidoka we'd not met before from dojo we'd only heard of.

The next day we travelled to the Butokuden, the magnificent martial arts training hall, which is the oldest Budo training hall in Japan, built in 1899. The outside was impressive, but when Sensei Pryce arrived and opened it for us and we stepped in, the inside was awe inspiring. A dark and cool interior, dark polished wood floor, heavy wooden beams, that spoke of a place of solemnity, of serious practise and focus. No samurai ever set foot in this place, it was built after the samurai class had been abolished, but the feel of the room invoked a sense of connection to that aspect of Japan's history. We were here to practise our aikido, a martial art only a few generations removed from the samurai using their arts on the battlefield.

Soon we were kneeling on the mat, ready to begin. With the doors on both sides open, a gentle breeze blew through the Butokuden, and our kiai could be heard outside.

Training was, as always, vigorous, focused and good spirited. The warm-up exercises were taken by Sensei Ian Tyler, classes were taught by Sensei Paul Derrick, Sensei John Pryce, and by Sensei Shane Riley. Again, training was over far too quickly, but no session would be complete without photographs and there were many to take, both formal and informal.



Our stay in Japan included training at Sensei Pryce's own early morning class and taking in more of the sights and experiences of Kyoto. We walked to the shrine at the top of Mount Inari, some (two!) tried the local delicacy of fried sparrows on sticks. We met the nodding deer of Nara and saw the temple of Todai-ji. Until recently this was the largest free-standing wooden structure in the world, a record it held for most of the thousand or more years since its construction. Inside, was a 52-foot-high bronze Buddha. It seemed wherever we went there was something else to make us go "wow, just wow."

How did we follow that? By walking up to the shrine of Kasuga-taisha. One of the gods enshrined here is Futsunushi no mikoto, god of martial arts.

Our journey to Japan was the beginning of our celebration of the first forty years of the White Rose Aikikai, but this had been a private celebration. We also wanted to celebrate publicly and share with our wider aikido community, and that could only happen in Yorkshire.

Part Two – Dewsbury, Yorkshire

The weekend began with a class at the White Rose Hombu on Friday evening. Earlier in the year we had celebrated the first anniversary of moving into our own permanent Hombu just outside Dewsbury in Yorkshire. It was fitting that our weekend should begin here.

Over the previous two days or so, guests had been arriving from Malaysia, Singapore, Athens, Northern Ireland and Belgium, and on the Friday the Hombu hosted around fifty students and guests. We were treated to sessions taught by Sensei Philip Smith, Shihan; Sensei Philip Lee, Shihan; and Sensei Tony Heseltine. There was a variety of techniques taught, different emphases on a range of aspects of aikido, and a real sense of energy and community on the mat. As well as the visiting sensei and students, we were joined by friends and students from times past, old faces, familiar faces.

Saturday morning was, for many, the beginning of the weekend. The two-day course was held at the Batley Sports & Tennis Centre, a venue large enough to accommodate the hundred or so who joined us on the mat. The centre-piece of the dojo was the kamiza, flanked by impressive poster-sized prints of O'Sensei and of Sensei Ken Cottier. In the foyer was a large printed banner displaying a collage of photographs spanning the forty years of the White Rose's history. Next to it was an equally large banner displaying an equal number of photographs. This banner was headed "In loving memory – Ken Cottier Shihan."



Sensei Cottier had been a supporter of the White Rose and of Sensei Riley for more than half the life of the White Rose Aikikai. This was a year to also celebrate the long and enduring influence Sensei Cottier had had—and still has—on the White Rose, and the close association between Sensei Cottier and Sensei Riley.

The aikido shared with us during the weekend was, of course, fantastic. Sensei Frank Burlingham, seventh dan, started proceedings and did his very unusual and amusing warm up. It may have been unusual, but it was certainly effective, and very much in the spirit of O'Sensei's words – always train in a joyous and vibrant manner. Sensei Paul Derrick, seventh dan, was next. A long-time student of Sensei Riley, Sensei Derrick taught his session with an economy of movement but a focus on connection with uke and the importance of moving uke's centre.

Sensei Philip Smith, seventh dan Shihan, took the first session after lunch, another different focus to his aikido. With so many students it was an opportunity to train with people of different levels, different physiques, different levels of strength and flexibility. Sensei Philip Lee, seventh dan Shihan, took the next session, and we were treated to another style of aikido. In each sensei's session we were challenged to expand our aikido practice and explore different aspects of our technique.

Sensei Shane Riley, seventh dan Shihan, took the final session, imparting his approach to his aikido and giving an insight into the origins of his style and his emphasis.

The evening had us coming together again at a nearby hotel for the gala dinner, with more than 100 aikidoka and their guests taking the opportunity to eat and drink and chat. Philip Smith told me that Sensei Cottier had talked about "small aikido" and "big aikido." "Small aikido" was what we do on the mat, "big aikido" is the community of aikidoka (and their friends and family) coming together in friendship and community. Saturday night was as much a success in our big aikido as the day had been in our small aikido.



Sunday was another incredible day's aikido. Some of us wondered how we'd manage another full day of training, and yet the morning flew by and before we knew it lunchtime had arrived. The morning had gone too quickly, as captivating experiences often do.

After lunch Sensei Philip Smith did jo work - interesting, quite a few had not brought weapons assuming we wouldn't use them, but there were plenty to go around.

Sensei Riley took the final session, closing a fabulous weekend of training. At the end of the class, Sensei Riley presented a (large) bonsai to Wing Pang as thanks for all his work doing the posters for the event, including the kamiza.

The weekend was over, our year of celebration was almost over. Many of us may not still be practicing aikido in another forty years' time, but it isn't hard to imagine the White Rose would again celebrate another significant milestone in its history, and would again share it with friends from across the world.

NATIONAL COURSE GALLERY









Institute of Aikido

Winter Course

28th – 29th March 2020

Sport Wales National Centre

Cardiff



Everyone is welcome to join in with our national course. Please bring your Jo, Bokken & Tanto. Up to date insurance is a requirement to practice.

Further information will be published on the Association website over the coming months.

www.instituteofaikido.uk



FUDOSHIN AIKIDO CARDIFF

**05 - 08
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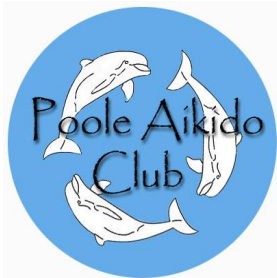
A weekend course with one of Europe's finest Aikido instructors.

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CELEBRATION AIKIDO SEMINAR

**Saturday 30th November and Sunday 1st December 2019
marking the 40 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF POOLE AIKIDO CLUB
and 50 years of training for Paul McGlone Sensei**

To be held at KINSON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Millhams Road, Pelhams Park, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH10 7LH

Paul McGlone Sensei, 7th Dan

Tony Sargeant Sensei, 6th Dan

John Longford Sensei, 6th Dan



Adults Only (over 18s)

Price On-the-Day £35 for one day, £60 for two days
(Advance booking rate available! See booking form for details.)

There will be a Saturday Evening Meal at a local Pub/Restaurant - Numbers are limited so advance booking is ESSENTIAL! (See booking form)
(Please Note - this will be a DIFFERENT restaurant from last year's seminar)

**Registration 09:25am, classes 09:40 – 16:35 Saturday,
09:30 – 16:15 Sunday**

(PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE ON TIME FOR CLASSES)

Please bring Bokken and Jo and proof of current insurance.

Remember - NO INSURANCE, NO TRAINING !!

You can bring your own lunch or there is a Tesco store about 200 metres from the centre.