

Kuk Sool Won ~ Born in Bury

by SBN Richard Morgan-Jones

The Beginning

The first Kuk Sool class held in Bury St Edmunds took place ten years ago - on Sunday 27th January 1994. I had contacted Headquarters two months earlier in order to set up the School officially and pay my fee. However, I started with no support or advice, just my training behind me. What I did have was belief in myself and the will to succeed.

Early days

The first eight weeks in our little village hall were tough going and during this time I had only one student. Fortunately, as a result of some well-placed ads, students started to trickle through the doors and by 1996 eighteen students were training on a regular basis. It was at this time I felt we should hold our first demonstration, at a fête in Fornham St. Martin. It was a resounding success and resulted in more students joining.

Growing fast

By 1999 the club was growing steadily and doing well through word of mouth, demos and ads and I felt that we were now ready and able to move our location right into the heart of Bury and put something back into the community. I was looking for good ideas as to how to do this effectively when, through good fortune, I met the Manager of Cornhill Walk Shopping Centre and the Manager of St. Nicholas' Hospice. We had a brainstorming session and came up with the idea of holding a sponsored kick (10,000 kicks +) for charity every two years in Cornhill Walk.

The first sponsored kick took place just one week after relocating the club to King Edward IV Upper School and was a great success for all concerned; the students, Cornhill Walk, the charities and the audience (who offered us tremendous support throughout). Eleven new students started directly as a result of seeing the sponsored kicking event and so, by 2002, the club was 'buzzing' and had really gone from strength to strength. This was underlined by the fact that five students were beginning black belt training.

Bearing Fruit

2003 proved to be a really good year for the club. I went to Barcelona with KSN Steve Morley to see Steve compete in the European Tournament. He won six gold medals and took the Grand Champion title! This really gave a lift to the nineteen students preparing to compete in the UK Tournament and they came back home with 54 medals between them, many of them gold. Steve again took the Grand Champion title – wow!

At this time I was I also under 11 days of intense instruction and 2 days of special training by Master Sung-Jin Suh "the next leader of Kuk Sool". Anyone who has done special training knows how hard it is to make it through that second day! As a result of this fantastic time with Master Sung-Jin, I felt like my training had gone forward 6 years - that's the kind of instructor he is.

We then flew to Houston for the World Championships where Steve won gold in techniques.

2004

The year started very well with a new and large European Tournament to add to the UK and Spanish Tournaments. We took twenty nine students and came away with 34 medals.

Karen Smith and Lynn Whiting promoted to black-belt. They became the first ladies in Bury to achieve this standard. Many others tried over the years but none made it so well done ladies! We went to Spain where they won 14 gold and silver medals between them, Lynn winning 1st degree 40+ Grand-Champion. The UK Tournament followed in Birmingham, we took eleven students and came away with 25 medals.

2005

2005 has been an amazing year for the club. We went back to Spain and Karen won the 1st degree Ladies Grand-Champion title and Kevin Sanford, Nicola Isted and Conner Sanford won the Mens, Ladies and Juniors Under Black-belt Grand-Champion titles respectively. The Bury club won 4th place, the first time the club had placed in the top five of any tournament.

In May we again did a demo at the St. Nicholas Hospice Fête (on the request of Sue Meader) to raise funds for the hospice. We 'went down' really well and raised a substantial amount. We plan to do our sponsored kick for them again in August in order to raise more funds.

In June Bury was honoured to host a major black-belt testing and seminar day officiated by Kuk Sa Nim himself, Master Sung-Jin Suh and several other Masters. Over 290 Kuk Sool students attended the day, many with their families turning out in support. Seven adult and junior Dahn Bo Nims from the club paid their fees and successfully completed their first-time tests for black-belt. They will now be watched closely to ensure they train regularly so they can achieve their dream of attaining black-belt. I would say to them "a year is a long time so keep going and don't let the door shut on you"!

This encouraged twenty one students to enter the European Tournament and we won a fantastic haul of 35 medals. Kevin Sanford and Jon Waugh promoted to Black-belt and Connor Sanford won Junior Under Black-belt Grand-Champion. It was also an auspicious time for me personally as I fulfilled a long-held dream to achieve the rank of Sa Ba Nim (4th degree). Now that I have got there I must change some of my own training in order to keep progressing. There is the next 5-7 years of training to consider and I must be disciplined. I am amazed by and take great strength from the example of Master Sung-Jin who is the same age as me. You must believe in yourself and believe that if you train hard, it will pay off. Examples of the changes I have made are: using a heart rate monitor and seeing a nutritionist. In life, people can knock you and you can let it get you down or you can stand and say we can all change and grow. Life is too short.

So in summary, this year has gone really well with four students bringing home Grand-Champion titles. Young Connor's achievement is particularly notable and a reflection of all the hard work he has put in. Kevin and Jon, you too now walk the golden path and you have done yourselves (and me) proud. So, no matter our age, we can all sweat together!!

I would like to say "well done" to all who compete for themselves and the Club. It takes a lot to go and do it and it does tell you a lot about yourself that you will never know if you stay behind and take the comfort zone.

2006

Euro tournament 2006 this year we had 29 entries, the most we have ever had compete in one tournament. We took 69 medals home (the most we have ever taken so far). Also this year Emily Draper walked away with the youth 13-16 grand champion, which is outstanding considering the amount there was in her group (about 30-35!).

Also we had three new promotions:

Alan Coldwell
Nicola Isted
Melissa Stewart

With everything else, the school walked away with 5th place in the overall points: well done to all students.

U.K tournament this year we had 19 entries, and we walked away with 54 medals and two grand champions: Mikey Bacon and again Emily Draper. Also we had Steve Gooderham promote to 2nd dann which was fantastic. Also some very good remarks from top master about how strong and good he looked at his testing well done K.S.N Steve.

So with another great year under our belts it seems to be getting better and better. But S.B.N Richard is already thinking how to improve and not just hoping it will happen. With 2007 already here he has decided to take his improving and tested students only 5 of the best to the top open tournaments and to take them to the next level, hopefully they will be able to compete with the rest of the styles of martial arts and by doing so the other students will want to be in this group of 5 and will need to train much harder. The amount of grand champions now trained by S.B.N Richard Jones is currently 14!!

Thank you for reading this article, till the next time update, take care

S.B.N. Richard

Black belts

Black belts that have walked through the doors of the Bury club, whether active or not:

Gez Woodhatch 638 3 00

Ashley Purt 638 3 04
Jonathan Keeble 638 3 05
Samuel Long 638 3 08
Steve Morley 638 3 09 / A11789
Steve Gooderham 638 3 18 / A12251
John Robinson 638 3 21
Lynn Whiting 638 3 15/ A14394
Karen Smith 638 3 56/ A14529
Kevin Sanford 638 3 52
Jon Waugh 638 3 51
Dan Henning A-8940
Alan Coldwell A-15894
Melissa Stewart A-15874
Susie Draper A-14923
Emily Draper A-14922
Nicola Isted 638 3 074
Meg Creighton 638 3 65
Zoe Creighton 638 3 64
Conor Sanford 638 3 57