

# TAI CHI CALEDONIA 2001

Caledonia? What is it? It's a waterfall of knowledge through which you pass all too infrequently and far too fast. All you can do is hope that some of it sticks! And the thing is that what you learn is not necessarily anything to do with what you signed up for or from the Instructors.

Everybody is teaching and everybody is learning something!

There was Relaxation exemplified in Helmut and Michael's San Shou; Commitment in Dan's Applications; Simplicity with Gordon's Chi Na; Ramona's Tui Na was a Revelation and Eva was Deep Dedication personified.

As an environment for learning it is unsurpassed and the site could not be bettered.

So that's my Pilgrimage over for another year, with its aftermath of 'Revise, Apply and Extend' till next time.

## Barrie Jehu

Taiji Caledonia, What a week....., and then we are not speaking about all the magnificent teachers that were there, the wild teaching methods used and the crazy bunny rabbits haunting us at night. Taiji Caledonia once again managed to stir my enthusiasm sky high and pushed my training up another wee notch.

The weekend was a brilliant opportunity to work with those teachers you were not familiar with and find out more about their teaching methods.

The week followed on and for people who are not familiar with the set-up, be aware, the teaching doesn't just happen within the morning or afternoon workshops. Early morning groups, late afternoon practice, late night push hands and private sessions from haunting teachers who happily visit you in your own chalet (and you thought you were safe there?). As you can imagine, after a week of hard training, catching up with old and new friends the Friday almost comes as a welcome break.

Then you realize on the next Monday that it takes another year to get the same good feeling back again.

## Francisca Noblesse

Though the courses are always excellent, it is the punters not the teachers who make Tai Chi Caledonia such a great event. They come in all shapes and sizes, all ages, different nationalities, but drawn together with a common love of T'ai Chi (with or without the Chuan). Most seem to be authorities on one aspect or another, have interesting forms to show, and take their practice seriously. In such a situation the competitive spirit could take over and stifle the openness needed to really learn something new. Somehow this doesn't happen and a feel-

ing of genuine co-operation and friendly support appears. Which is just the way it should be. At the end of the week it was astonishing how much had been achieved in so short a time. The



The Instructors at Caledonia 2001

end of week demonstrations were inspiring to watch, and showed also just how much variety there is in this strange activity called T'ai Chi. I hope someone else will write about the great organisation, teachers, entertainment and food! But thank you to all those other participants, who created such a good atmosphere and I'm sure, like myself, had a great week.

## Dee Swift



John Bolwell & students demonstrate their Monkey Staff

Tai Chi Caledonia 2001 was recently held at Stirling University campus which provided a pleasant backdrop, looking not unlike the set of Teletubbies. As a weekend attendee, I sampled a variety of classes. These were scheduled over the weekend in such a way that if you missed a class one day, you could pick it up the next day at a different time. The breadth of topics covered in the classes was stunning: from martial applications and Chi Na joint locks to Peking Opera, Chi Kung and Tui Na massage.

Of course, people have different reasons for doing Tai Chi, and this is reflected in the way they focus their efforts: health aspects, hand and weapon forms, pushing hands. However, I can honestly say that regardless of your motivations or interests, there was something new to learn. Indeed, it was gratifying to see the same concepts appearing throughout the different classes.

I think a mark of the event's success was that the level of participation from attendees was such that you could learn almost as much outside the classes as you could in classes. In particular, I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to push hands with me on the balcony of the sports bar, especially Eva and Robbie. Overall, the mixture of top-class tuition, participation, and friendly

faces made for a very enjoyable weekend. I'll definitely be going back next year.

## Stuart Blair

I thought that I WAS a Tai Chi Anorak! OK !, I haven't been a Tai Chi player for too long, nearly 2 years, but I thought I knew a thing or two about it. In the length of time that I have been studying Tai Chi, I must have bought every book video and magazine and visited every web site.

So I was pretty confident I "knew my onions!" until I decided to go on my first solo holiday to Tai Chi Caledonia. Boy was I left at the starting post in that respect!, it was like dying and waking up in Tai Chi Heaven. Everywhere I turned, from 6am till midnight people were "at it", and probably longer. The most amazing thing that I encountered was that everyone from the instructors to the individual player were so down to earth and friendly. As I had arrived by myself I quickly fell in with a really good bunch of like minded folk with a fondness for Tai Chi and "Celtic relaxation"! The sheer quality of the event was superb, the instructors that I had chosen to spend the week with were so

patient and inspirational it reawakened the saying "What we learn with pleasure we never forget"! , so a huge thankyou to Claudy Jeanmougin and the irrepressible John Bollwell. From all the other players at Caledonia, their exuberance and love of Tai Chi shone through and in the frequent late night demonstrations and discussions, it brought home to me the fact that I have a lot to learn, however if it is in the same fashion as my Caledonia experience it will be an enjoyable and life long adventure along with an occasional session of "Celtic Relaxation".

## Bernie Nash

## Reviews: by the participants

Having spent the weekend at Tai Chi Caledonia last year, I had an inkling that the full 7 days were going to be fairly special. Not a bad call. The event surpassed my expectations, in almost every area. The superb quality of instruction, laced through with gentle and ribald humour, ensured that no moment was wasted. From the fast-and-furious weekend classes, to the morning and afternoon workshops, plus extra sessions, there was nary a moment not filled with learning, growing, playing, experimenting and having fun. No surprise then, that the people who are drawn to an event like this are as stimulating as the activities. It was with the greatest pleasure that I met friends from last year and discovered new friends aswell. A full-on Tai Chi rollercoaster-ride!



The Tuina Demonstrators perform their final techniques!

Special thanks to the following folks: **Ronnie, Bob and Karen:** To all for their heroic orchestration of every event. (Right down to the "feedback for next year" meeting). To Karen, for her endless good humour and patience. To Bob, for his duracell bunny guitarfest and Ronnie for his quiet words. (But it'll be a while before I want to see marmalade again)! **Francoise, Elaine and Dee.** For their friendship and for sharing moments. **Barbara** For many, cherished cuddles. In fact thanks to everyone that was there and contributed to the huge shmorgasborg of entertainment that it was...YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE!.....Cheers,

Or, putting it in another and entirely experimental way.....

Honest, open folk,  
Exploring inner landscape,  
Risk madness and fun.

First tentative steps  
Hard questions, easy answers  
Application now

Generosity  
of Body, Mind and Spirit  
Barbara Cuddles

Cheerful, happy tum  
Aroma, texture, and taste,  
When Germans cater

Misttime forest walk,  
Energy between our hands  
and the tree Hugs back.

Good work and fine times  
Tai Chi Caledonia  
Nourishes my heart

Karen Aitken

From Music, to Yoga, to Tai Chi – a fruitful journey. Having been a professional musician for some 17 yrs I have developed a natural gravity toward the weird n wonderful. I suppose it's having a creative musical mind that eventually lead me toward exploring 'mind-body' work as a means of working on myself the same way I used music to express inner emotion. For the past 15 years I have been



Helmut Oberlack & Karen at San Shou

Great people, inspirational instructors, lovely surroundings and the grub wasn't too bad either. Seriously though, working with Chen style Tai Chi has been an incredible experience from which I have gained enormous benefit. Working with the mind-body-breath in this way brings a 'fresh' experience of myself the world and its forces in which I inhabit.

A word to all Yogi's out there! Drop the Asana and Pranayama for a week and get your butts up to Stirling. Take your self-development onto a new level and experience 'Yoga in motion'.

Interaction with others is a unique aspect to martial applications, one that Yoga cannot bring to the practitioner in the same way. Life after all is about interaction, interaction and relationship between everything, Tai Chi is the vehicle through which we can experience this interaction and relationship directly and dynamically. For me it's definitely the next step on the ascending spiral of exploring my human potential.

A HUGE thanks to the organisers, the instructors for their dedication and passion, all my mates in Chalet 9, and to everyone who participated during the week who helped to make what has so far been the best week of my entire life!

Karl Hemmings

*The 6th Annual Tai Chi Caledonia took place at Stirling University in Central Scotland. The International Gathering hosted over 120 participants who experienced a variety of approaches to the Internal Arts. Students and teachers came from near and far including Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Norway and even a few brave souls ventured north from England!*

*This pages contain the words and feelings of the students who attended the event, one of whom (Karen Aitken) also did the layout for this piece!*

week out of my busy schedule to take part in Tai Chi Caledonia? Well, looking back at my experiences of the week I can only describe it as a 'natural progression'. My journey toward embracing Tai Chi could be likened to the progression of notes in a musical scale. Each note (or experience) leading to the next in such a way that eventually a complete scale is produced bringing everything into context and offering a deeper and richer understanding of all the other notes. Tai Chi Caledonia was amazing.



Claudly Jeanmougin makes a point!

Next year's event takes place from the 7th - 14th June. Information from [www.taichi-caledonia.co.uk](http://www.taichi-caledonia.co.uk)