

Comment



Things continue to move forward with the union. This month we have a new website, well probably more an updated website but it looks good. For all of us the good news is that the search for instructors' facility is being upgraded as well so it should be easier for all those potential students to find us.

Also we have a new fund – the Gerda Gedes fund which, members can apply for to fund socially beneficial projects

On page 18 we publish the results of a survey. We asked members four questions to tell us about their experience of lockdown. The response was massive, far too big for us to use all of your comments but a number of themes emerged which I have tried to reflect in the report. Overall, the one that I personally, most empathised with, was that now it is all over, class sizes have shrunk and how hard it is to recruit new students.

Since I started teaching, most Christmas breaks brought phone calls from people wanting to start tai chi in the new year. Come January we would have a flush of new students. Not all of them stayed, inevitably, but there were usually a couple who stayed. I think the most memorable year was when we had over 20 turn up. They came in groups. People who had called me brought friends, I could barely cope. The following week ten of them turned up though I can't remember how many actually joined the class. As the saying goes: 'It takes 1,000 to start for one to finish'. I sometimes wonder if that isn't too generous a ratio.

The point is that in 2019 the enquiries didn't come. Everyone was being terrified by reports of a new virus. Potentially a killer which no one, the medics, the scientists and certainly not the government knew what to do about. At the end of 2020 we were all but locked down, Christmas was cancelled and by 2021 there was a new variant and although there was no official reaction people were cancelling by their own volition. A Christmas lunch, which I attend every year, was held for the first time since 2019. Usually over 100 people, but there were many empty seats. In fact so many people had paid and not turned up that we were offered another starter. Smoked salmon, my favourite!

And in new year 2022 just the hard core students.

But this year, we keep telling ourselves, everything is back to normal though no enquiries in December and no new students in January. The class a shadow of its former self. But things do seem to be changing, slowly. A few enquiries over the last couple of months has resulted in four new students. They all seem keen – when didn't new students seem keen? We shall see but at least there is life after lockdown and next month I am attending a seminar, my first since before lockdown, and planning a trip to Tai Chi Caledonia.

It still feels a bit fragile but normality seems within grasp.

John Roper

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