



## KEN COTTIER:

### AN AIKIDO TEACHER MUCH LOVED AND MUCH MISSED

*Aikido enthusiasts throughout the world were greatly saddened to hear that Ken Cottier passed away on 8 June after a prolonged illness. His Aikido career began in 1962 when he had instruction from Kenshiro Abbe; and a few years later he went to Japan, where he trained at the Hombu Dojo under the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba. In 1971 he founded the Hong Kong Aikido Association, of which he was President. In 2002 he was promoted to the rank of Shihan by the Aikikai. For many years he was a prominent personality in the International Aikido Federation, appointed first as a member of its Senior Council and later of its Directing Committee. After returning to live permanently to Britain in 1999 he became a Senior Member of the B.A.F. National Committee and taught at many B.A.F. Summer Schools and Spring Courses, as well as being invited to take courses throughout the UK. He was an extremely popular and respected Aikido teacher, and tributes have been flowing in from all over the world. Here are some from B.A.F. members.*

“I first met Ken Cottier in the early seventies when I attended a class he was taking in London during a brief visit to England from Hong Kong, where he was living at the time. I was tremendously impressed by his talents as a teacher (being a teacher by profession myself I particularly appreciated them). His class was so well structured, his pace just right, his delivery loud and clear. And afterwards I found him so approachable, patient in explaining some particular point when he was questioned.

Although he returned to Hong Kong soon after that occasion I kept in touch through audio cassettes. I felt we had a lot in common, in addition to our devotion to Aikido. We were of similar age and we both came from the same part of the country: I from Liverpool and he

from the Wirral across the River Mersey. It was interesting to hear about the period he spent as a child during World War II evacuated to a rural area near Newtown in central Wales, where he attended a small village school where Welsh was spoken. That was why, I suppose, he still had a slight Welsh accent.

Of course we met again on numerous occasions when he visited England and more often after he finally returned to live permanently in his home town of Eastham.

What particularly impressed me with Ken was his fair-mindedness. He never had a bad word for anybody; and when he did hear someone being criticized, he was always ready to give them the benefit of the doubt and imagine another side to a story. He had a great sense of humour and an endless fund of amusing anecdotes. He was held in the highest regard by people all over the world.”

*Peter Megann*



“During the Second World War, Ken was evacuated to mid-Wales, a sojourn which left him with fond memories: so he was always pleased to come to Sudokan (the Aberystwyth dojo), where his classes always delighted and enlightened us. He still retained quite a bit of Welsh, especially when he had had a few beers with which we plied him here at Aberystwyth, in the heart of Wales. He knew the words (and often, recognisably, the tunes) of many songs which he should not have remembered, and of course his

stories were equally irrepressible.

His brother Ron, together with Mamie and the rest of his loving family, were overwhelmed at the esteem in which Ken was held, all over the world; but this high regard was not simply due to his astounding gifts in respect of aikido, but to his qualities as a man. Almost comically self-effacing, he was the last to realise that the love we all felt for him was because of his humanity, his interest in others. His unpatronising encouragement of the young was especially notable: off the mat, he did not expect them to stand on ceremony.

Not all that long ago, he was still in his own home: when I used to ring him up to ask how he was, his first words were, 'How is your wife?' This is what I shall remember of him (not to speak of his wonderful company and humour): whatever his difficulties, he would think first of others, of himself last. What a man; how privileged we are to have counted him a friend!"

*David Wulston*

"I have many fond memories of Cottier Sensei – the respect he commanded in training sessions in Hong Kong; the reverence that seniors all showed to him when we travelled to Vietnam (1994), Singapore (1995) and Hawaii (1996); his *nikyo* on a young Vietnamese aikidoist who challenged him in a bar in Hochimin City (his wrist ended up in plaster!) and then immediately standing up and singing the most amazing sequence of songs to everyone there; the comradeship he installed in the Hong Kong musketeers who toured with him, not just for the love of aikido but more for the friendship he generated amongst us of which, of course, he was the centre; the echo of his unique voice "William!" or "Well, William, you must..." whether I was on the mat or not! It is only now I am starting to understand glimpses of what he wanted me to understand all those years ago; and finally those precious private lessons with him on Saturday mornings in Hong Kong shared with Juneko and Jay and the English breakfast we would all enjoy afterwards when he would entertain us with stories of his time in Japan and of O-Sensei himself. However, to elaborate in more detail on any of these would to some degree do him disrespect, since although Cottier Sensei was a man of many stories and songs, he was not one who would ever wish to be a story. He was such a private man on the one hand and yet, on the other, universal in that he knew everyone on the aikido circuit by their first names whether beginners or experts, and was able to engage with all due to his empathetic and sincere nature.

I remember talking to him on the telephone the night before he passed away. Even at this time of great pain and fear, all he wanted to talk about was me, my wife (who often joined us for breakfast in Hong Kong), my daughter and of course our time in Hong Kong together. This was typical of his selflessness in giving me his time despite his breathing difficulties and the many others trying to contact him at this time.

What he shared with everyone was a very precious gift – that of himself. If Aikido's ultimate purpose is to polish the soul then Cottier Sensei had reached the highest level.

It shone with such triumph through his bright active eyes, his kind grin and joyful face no matter where he was – teaching aikido or chatting over a beer on Nathan Road. For me that is his greatest legacy, that pure polished spirit that made him the quintessential English Gentleman."

*William Spooner*

"Ken Cottier was the true Gentleman Master. No matter whom he met, all were treated with the same respect and dignity. In fact many will remember his first words to them, which were often "I'm Ken Cottier, you are?" With these words many a lifetime friendship was forged.

We were drawn into his enthusiasm for Aikido, and life itself. To practise with him always left you feeling he had shared this special art, the aikido he had taken up all those years ago, that had kept him in Japan to study under O-Sensei, and many of the great masters of the day. To sit with Cottier Sensei and hear his many recollections of those days, often late into the night over a glass or two, was a privilege, because not only have we lost a teacher and friend, we have lost this precious link to O-Sensei. He may not have been the 'Father of British Aikido', but he was, and will always will be, the Great Uncle of British Aikido.

It is important that we thank Cottier Sensei's family for sharing him with us. His brother Ron said that they had no idea of the love and respect which the Aikido world held for him – from Japan, Hong Kong, South Africa... to the Wirral, and many places in between. He will be sorely missed.

Thank you Ken for being you! We will keep you close to our hearts always."

*Peter Gillard*

"Like many folk, I have a large number of good memories of Cottier Sensei. I very much enjoyed both his style of aikido and his style of teaching. There is one memory in particular that sticks in my mind. As it is a story that I often find myself thinking about, I thought it would be appropriate to share it. I apologize at the outset that I've forgotten some of the details, such as the names of all those involved.

During a break at a December course in Cardiff several years ago, Cottier Sensei offered to answer any questions we had about O-Sensei, or indeed any other (aikido-related) questions we might have. So, we gathered around, and someone asked him about his favourite memory of O-Sensei, and he shared this with us. He had been on the mat in Hombu one evening, practising with another one of the students there, who was a big strong guy. The other guy was holding *morote-dori*, and Cottier Sensei couldn't move him, try as he might. He saw O-Sensei walking through the dojo, and asked for assistance. O-Sensei came over and had the other guy hold him *morote-dori*. Hold harder, O-Sensei said, and the other guy held harder. Harder, O-Sensei said again, and the other guy put everything he had into his grip. O-Sensei then hit the other guy, lightly, in the face, threw him easily, and walked off the mat."

*Jim Anderson*

# IMPORTANT POINTS IN DAI SANKYO (KOTE-HINERI)

TACHI-WAZA URA

Demonstrated and explained by  
Kanetsuka Sensei

**Photo 1:** As *Uke* attacks with *shomen-uchi* *Tori* advances to meet the attack and makes contact in *gyaku-hanmi*. (If you are already in *gyaku-hanmi* relationship with your partner, you slide your foot to a point slightly to the side of your partner's forward foot. If you are in *ai-hanmi* you must bring your rear foot forward to change to *gyaku-hanmi*). Be careful not to advance too deeply or to find yourself too far away from your partner at this moment. Make contact with his striking arm with your hand-blade near his wrist (*don't try to grasp it at this stage*) and at the same moment swing your left arm up to make contact with your hand on his arm just above his elbow. Keep your back straight. As your arms swing up from your centre your wrists rotate inwards and your elbows begin to rise. **Do not push against your partner:** your arms must be neither bent nor too straight – the same feeling as in *suwari-waza kokyu-ho*.



**Photos 2 & 3:** Turn your head and make *tenkan* as you cut down your partner's striking arm with your hand-blade; at the same time maintain good contact with his elbow with a 'U' formation of your left hand – this contact is made with the heel of your hand and your thumb and lower three fingers (*don't try to grip the elbow too tightly*). **Bring your partner's arm down to a point in front of your abdomen before you start to pivot**, then make a *tenkan* movement (though not too large a one), turning your body to finish at an angle of about 60° to your partner. Towards the end of this cutting movement grasp your partner's wrist with the hand that was cutting down.



**Photos 4 & 5:** While controlling your partner with your left hand, slide your right hand to the finger tips of his right hand. *Using your whole body (not just your arms)* swing up in a circular movement that starts from your rear foot and continues towards your partner's face. You should involve your whole body – and in particular your hips – in the swinging-up movement. Your arms should not move independently of the rest of your body. Start to exert a twist on your partner's arm with your right hand, as your wrist turns clockwise.



**Photos 6 & 7:** Without losing the momentum of this swinging action, let go of your partner's elbow and slide your left hand underneath his elbow to make contact with his wrist. Study the correct grip. It is similar to a grip on a sword. Curl your lower three fingers around your partner's 'hand-blade'. Your thumb is placed at the root of his thumb; your index finger is not engaged.

## RYUSHINKAN SPECIAL NEW YEAR COURSE – LONDON 3/4 January

**3 January, 1pm – 5pm**

**Yoshinobu Ohta**  
(Japan Karate Association)

and

**Minoru Kanetsuka**

Hendon Leisure Centre  
Marble Drive (off Claremont Road)  
Brent Cross NW2 1XQ  
Tel: 0208 455 0819



£40 – full course  
£30 – Saturday only  
£20 – Sunday only

Further details contact:  
Mami – 07931 787151

**4 January, 10am – 1pm**

**Minoru Kanetsuka**  
(Technical Director of the B.A.F.)

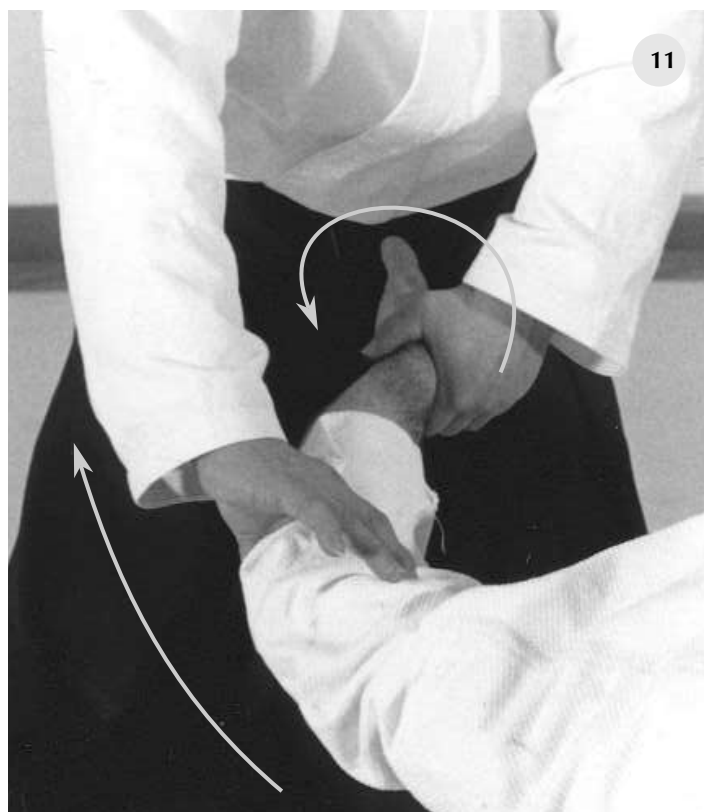
Burnt Oak Leisure Centre  
Watling Avenue  
Edgware HA8 0NP  
Tel: 0208 201 0982

<http://ryushinkan.org/details.htm>



**Photos 8 & 9:** Thrust towards your partner's armpit, extending your *kokyu*. Engage your centre in the movement (not just your arms): the feeling is the 'eh' part of *tori-fune*. Making *atemi* to your partner's face helps you to centralise your movement and give it more focus. Bend your knees well and maintain a low posture. Keep your shoulders relaxed and your hips flexible. It is this movement from your waist that takes your partner upwards, not just your arms. Keep your partner's hand about level with your waist and always in your centre (don't move it to your side). **As you thrust towards your partner's armpit, bring him up onto his toes, but don't bring his arm up too high.** If you lift your partner's elbow higher than his shoulder, there is a possibility that he can swing backwards and escape. The secret of success is to control the whole of his body by twisting the whole of his arm, with the twisting movement spiralling up to his shoulder. Even though *Sankyo* is also called *Kote-hineri* ('Wrist-twist') your twisting movement should involve your partner's whole arm.

**Photos 10 & 11:** Adjusting your front foot slightly, reach out with your right arm and place your right hand above your partner's elbow with your thumb on the outside pointing downwards. There should be a roundness in your arms as in the final stage of *suwari-waza kokyu-ho* with your right elbow slightly raised. Keep gripping your partner's wrist strongly with your left hand, twisting clockwise all the time. Keep your hands in front of your centre.



12



13



**Photos 12 & 13:** Make *tenkan* to your right, lowering your centre as you make a spiral movement so that you take your partner down to the ground. *Do not pull or drag your partner:* simply cut down and move backwards, harmonising your movement with his until he is lying on the *tatami*.

*The final immobilisation is identical with that shown in the omote form of the technique in the previous Newsletter (no 57, May 2008).*

## B.A.F. NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR 2008–2009

### Executive Members:

*Peter Gillard (Chairman)*  
*Dave Yates (Vice-Chairman)*  
*Peter Megann (General Secretary)*  
*John Parkinson (Treasurer)*  
*Don Morgan (Vice-Chairman of the  
 Technical and Grading Committee)*  
*Ken Marsden and Allan Rowley (Senior Members)*  
*Reenee Barton (Child Protection Officer)*

### Co-opted members:

James Anderson	Ken Gannon
Simon Fraser	Ian McClarence
Steve Parr	

## B.A.F. TECHNICAL AND GRADING COMMITTEE FOR 2008–2009

Kanetsuka Sensei (Chairman)  
 Don Morgan (Vice-Chairman)  
 Peter Gillard                      Ian McClarence  
 Ken Marsden                      Peter Megann  
 Steve Parr                         Allan Rowley  
 David Yates

### Shidoiin

Don Morgan	Peter Gillard
Colman Glynn	Ian McClarence
Ken Marsden	Peter Megann
Steve Parr	Allan Rowley
Brian Smith	David Yates

### Fukushidoiin

Ken Gannon	Bill Jackson
Alex Megann	Byron Thomas

*Ian McClarence has been designated Principal Instructor for England, and Don Morgan Principal Instructor for Wales.*

## NEW B.A.F. and B.U.A.F. DOJOS

Dr. Gudrun Rieck, who trained for many years at the Sho Bu Kan Dojo in Cardiff, had to move for professional reasons to Bangor in North Wales. It did not take her long to open a dojo near the Menai Bridge and affiliate it to the British Aikido Federation. Simon Hirst who has been training with Eric Gillett at the Fushi Cho Kan dojo in Colchester has created a dojo at Basildon in Essex and affiliated it to the B.A.F..

The aikido club at Plymouth University under its instructor Inocencio Maramba has affiliated to the British Universities Aikido Federation.

## YUDANSHA PROMOTIONS AT SUMMER SCHOOL 2008

### 1 Dan

Ruth Abbott (Bishopston)  
 Mark Ashworth (Jirikimusubi)  
 Colin Bevan (Port Talbot)  
 Simon Hirst (Fushi Cho Kan)  
 Pam Sacre (Corndon)  
 Andy Spearing (Genbukan)  
 Brian Wood (Bradford Dojo)  
 Martin Hughes (Ryusuikan)

### 2 Dan

James Anderson (Shiseikan)  
 Paul Bernard (Shobukan)  
 Gudrun Rieck (Shobukan)  
 Mike Thomson (Genbukan)

*Recommendations (to be confirmed at the Kagami Biraki Ceremony at the Hombu Dojo in January)*

### 5 Dan

David Yates (Wa Go Kan)

### 6 Dan

Ken Marsden (Leeds Dojo)  
 Peter Megann (Oxford Dojo)

## OBITUARY: OKUMURA SENSEI

We were saddened to hear that the senior Hombu Shihan, Shigenobu Okumura Sensei (9 Dan), passed away in August 2008. Many B.A.F. students will retain vivid memories of the wonderful course he gave in Cardiff in 1994, in which he showed himself not only as a great exponent of Aikido but also as a remarkable teacher with a clear passion to communicate in great detail what he was teaching that weekend.

Okumura Sensei began his Aikido career in 1938 and joined the Aikikai Hombu Dojo teaching staff in the 1950s, playing a significant role in the post-war development of Aikido, and was the Standing Director of the All-Japan Aikido Federation.



Okumura Sensei in Cardiff in 1994.

## SUMMER SCHOOL IN THE FRENCH PYRENEES WITH KANETSUKA SENSEI

From 11th to 14th July, the French Summer Course took place in the village of Fos in the Pyrenees, near the Spanish border. It was well attended and apart from the French hosts and the usual suspects from this side of the Channel, guests from the Netherlands made the long journey down to the south of France, making this seminar a truly international event. The Aikido classes were spread over the four days: a short 90-minute lesson on Friday evening to prepare everyone, morning and afternoon classes on Saturday and Sunday, leaving sufficient time for a substantial meal at lunchtime (after all we were in France, weren't we?!) and a final early lesson on Monday morning, to refresh our minds on what had been studied so far. Meanwhile, it was a very special weekend for the locals as their Patron Saint's Day celebrations were taking place in the nearby village of Cierp on Saturday night and Sunday with an outdoor disco and funfair, followed by Bastille Day celebrations on Monday. Thankfully, no heads were chopped off this year and those of us who weren't too worn out by the training had plenty to do at night...

During the day, more than 13 hours of Aikido were on the programme, all of them led by Kanetsuka Sensei whose teaching was based on the study of *kokyū* and the relationship between *tori* and *uke* from a variety of attacks. At first, the basic grabs *katate-* and *kosa-dori*, followed by *kata-dori* and *ryo-kata -dori* were chosen to help the students feel where and how their body and energy should be used, in order to gain control of their partner before moving into a technique. The emphasis, however, was not on the techniques but on what enables *tori* to perform them. Occasionally, Sensei would ask the students to close their eyes



Kanetsuka Sensei in Agen (March 2008)

and try to feel what they should be doing next, according to *uke's* contact. At one point, from the stage on one side of the dojo, Sensei would drag *uke* on to the stage from a lying position without using muscular strength. This might sound unconventional but it was a perfect illustration of the contact *tori* should have to lead *uke* to an unbalanced position. From the very first class onwards, Sensei displayed an incredible dynamism, despite the fact that he and his family had left his home at three o'clock that morning in order to catch an early flight to France!

Surely, the secret of such an amazing form lies in the fresh air of the French countryside – and before you say anything, no, I'm not biased. It has to be said that this region, known mainly for its skiing resorts, is equally attractive in the summer for its array of outdoor activities. Many seminar participants used their free time to go hiking or to rent mountain bikes in order to enjoy the world-famous landscapes of the Pyrenees. Personally, if I had any energy left after a sweaty aikido class, I would go rafting or canoeing on the local rivers, but hard training got me so dehydrated that regular pit stops were necessary for another kind of refreshment... For those interested in more cultural activities, or with less energy, the area is also full of historical sites worth visiting on both the French and the Spanish side of the border. Such a fantastic site is ideal for aikido practice as one really feels at harmony with nature. A stream running by can even be seen and heard from the dojo, thanks to its large opening on one side, and every year some enthusiasts stay in the campsite on the other side of the dojo.

However, this year many people chose to stay in the only hotel and restaurant of the village 'La Gentilhommière', across the road from the dojo. It proved to be a very good choice for English speakers, as the owners were a British couple who had recently renovated and opened the place. I must say, I got a little bit worried the chef might also be British when I realised the 'plat du jour' was lamb 'sauce à la menthe'. Luckily, despite the ominously English feel, the chef was clearly French and those of us who ate there regularly were never disappointed. The course organizers from Bordeaux and Agen were also very pleased with the turnout from France, the Netherlands and the UK and organized drinks on Sunday evening, giving everyone an opportunity to meet and share their experience. In the end, the French Summer School was clearly a success; and as well as learning a great deal on the mat where the atmosphere was studious and focused, we also managed to enjoy the surroundings and the local hospitality.

Stéphane Arnaud

## B.A.F. SUMMER SCHOOL AT CHESTER, 2008

One of the first classes that I was able to attend at this year (various factors prevented me from being present at as many as I would have liked) was led by Ian McClarence, who said “If you think you can do it, you can’t”. There is an element of paraphrase in this, for I forget his exact words, but its sentiments were clear and vivid: too often we see the instructor doing something that is familiar on the surface but, when called upon to practise, we revert to doing what we have always done. Yet what was being shown was something slightly different; what we thought we *saw* differed substantially from what we should have *observed*. The techniques which he demonstrated were not exotic, but there was an emphasis on doing them slightly differently and with more understanding of the basics that underlie them. One of his other throwaway lines was something like “look as though you know what you are doing”.

This was underlined by Don Morgan in one of his classes: looking the part was half the battle, so good *kamae* through basic exercises was more important than a shallow acquaintance with a multiplicity of techniques. So, too, Steve Parr emphasised the basics of good attack and contact, movement from the hips, bending the knees, and so on. All simple things; all simply forgotten when it came to gradings. Indeed, Kanetsuka Sensei waxed eloquent at the Yudansha gradings on the lack of proper attacks by *uke*. The burden of his remarks were that the more we ascend the grading ladder, the further we appear to get from the grounding of aikido. So, as Steve Parr succinctly summarised the matter before the gradings resumed, “You heard it; now do it!”.

Kobayashi Sensei’s classes, as always, were a revelation: his enthusiasm and unstinting energy were an example to all. His amiable and forthcoming manner, coupled with clear instruction, were a joy to behold. He covered a bewildering array of topics and techniques, basic and sophisticated: these included variations on *shomen-uchi Ikkyo*, assorted techniques against a *yokomen* attack, the subtleties of *shiho-nage*, and many applications of *kokyū-nage*. He put a great deal of effort into clarifying the role of *uke*: his sessions, where he often took this role, were exhilarating and searching in their requirements. Instructor and pupils alike were in need of a shower and a rest at the end of the allotted time.

Kanetsuka Sensei, on the other hand, was more didactic; or rather, he denied that he could teach us – he could merely show us; it was up to us to learn. ‘See with your ears’ was one of his mottoes. His themes were familiar: *torifune*, *furitama* and their related *kokyū* were important foundations of aikido; but although the themes were familiar (as was Paganini’s, which was demonstrated with *fukuri jinai* to good effect during one of his classes) their run-of-the-mill performance left much to be desired; knowing the notes was a long way, he implied, from a faultless execution. His many Houdini-like escapes from multiple attackers (in some cases pertaining more to Sorbo the Rubber Man) continued to amaze and instruct, and he illustrated many of his points with sundry *objets trouvés* such as a magazine, yard-brush and a metre rule (which latter did not have the necessary *ki* to survive his demonstration).

In the early mornings Ken Marsden emphasised the role of sword-work for maintaining good balance and correct *kamae*: because of this, the particular



*Kobayashi Sensei*

difficulties in *bokken* training are particularly valuable in maintaining stability and good posture and greatly benefits the execution of the *tai-sabaki* and of self-development for aikido in general. Whether or not movements should appear to be forward or retracting, he said, the mind and spirit should always be directed to the front. He also stressed the importance of warming-up and -down exercises.

At the beginning of Summer School there was brief homage to the late and sorely missed Ken Cottier; but his spirit lived on in various ways, notably in Brian Smith’s classes where many practical defences (against various realistic attacks, including from knives) were ably demonstrated. *Hiji-no-bashi* (a variant of the *ude-no-bashi*, or *Gokyo* seen on p. 176 of Doshu’s Best Aikido 2) and many other useful techniques were covered. Similarly, Steve Parr introduced several practical variations of more standard techniques which were applicable to real-life confrontations.

Hubert van Ravensberg was among many of the other instructors who contributed to the rich variety of classes available. His fluent demonstration of various forms of *kokyū-ho* (together with his insistence that aikido is not about body-building) was memorable. He echoed Messrs McClarence and Parr in asking those on the mat to behave as though this was their first aikido class; to keep an open mind, and act as though aikido is for lazy people (though not for lazy brains!). Colman Glynn’s class, too, emphasised fluid and gentle technique, together with the importance of good *ukemi*: his quiet manner and comparable instruction belied the efficacy of his aikido which he sought to communicate to a receptive class.

This fortieth anniversary year was special in many ways. Its organisation was, as always, unobtrusively efficient. It is therefore fitting to compliment (this spelling was unfortunately traduced in the Chepstow report due to a misprint) all of those behind the scenes who made the week so enjoyable, and also Dave Yates and Renee Barton for explaining the intricacies of B.A.B. policies connected with teaching junior members of the B.A.F.. Finally it would be remiss of me not to thank our indefatigable Chariman Peter Gillard, and also our hard working General Secretary Peter Megann for their continuing efforts on our behalf. The B.A.F. is fortunate indeed to have so many dedicated people to whose unobtrusive labours we all owe so much.

*D.W.*



*Sensei Matthew Holland*