



# Katsu-Mi Kai Shotokan Karate

May 2009

## NEWSLETTER

### AN INSPIRING VISIT TO JAPAN



*A photo opportunity not to be missed for the English visitors. Yamamoto Sensei (left) and Tanaka Sensei outside the JKA*

TWO members of St Ives Shotokan Karate Club had an unforgettable experience in March when they were lucky enough to visit Japan for the third time.

With the generous help and assistance of their friend Sensei Dave Hooper, who has lived in Tokyo and trained at the JKA for over 30 years, SKC St Ives instructor Steve Matteson and Kim Nicol were able to train at dojos which, without Sensei Hooper, would have been very difficult for an occasional visitor to Japan.

One of the undoubted highlights was to train with the legendary Osaka Sensei, one of Shotokan's great technicians. In a small informal training session it was a very great honour to have personal instruction from this kind and unassuming sensei and each correction he pointed out will certainly be diligently worked upon by the two visitors. There was so much to take away from the two hours training.

Steve and Kim trained at the JKA honbu dojo at Iidabashi, Tokyo several times and it was awe inspiring to train with such sensei as Naka and Kurihara, the JKA kata champion. Again, a lot of valuable information to take away from the all-too-short training sessions. If one message could be taken away from training with any JKA instructor, it is that kihon is the route of everything and it cannot be practiced enough.

It was a great honour to be invited to train at the dojo of Sensei Richard Heselton, another Englishman who moved to Japan to study JKA Shotokan and subsequently made his life there. Sensei Heselton is highly regarded at the JKA and revered as a devastating fighter. He runs a JKA dojo in Nishigahara, Tokyo attracting western, as well as Japanese students. Miwa Sensei's dojo on the Izu Peninsula was also a much anticipated visit for

Steve and Kim, escorted by Sensei Dave and, as ever, it was a pleasure to train with him and be invited into his home.

Steve and Kim also once again enjoyed the company and training of Yamamoto Sensei who runs his own club in Kamakura.

Huge thanks must go to Sensei Hooper, without whose help the visit would not have been so memorable. Anyone considering a visit to Japan should not hesitate. *KN & SM*



*Osaka Sensei with Kim and Steve*



#### Kanku Sho Kata Bunkai Course

*Sensei Mark Carroll is pictured (left) demonstrating a technique at his recent bunkai course in Cheltenham.*

The course report is on Page 2.

#### COURSE & DAN GRADINGS

**Saturday 25th July 1 p.m. til 5 p.m.**  
Wellsprings Leisure Centre,  
Taunton TA2 7QP

#### KATSU-MI KAI KYU GRADINGS

to be held at Melksham for anyone wishing to attend/grade. Training begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday evenings  
10th June & 16th September

#### WEEKEND COURSE AT ST IVES

9th/10th/11th October at St Ives Guildhall. Combine a training course with a short break in the seaside resort of St Ives, Cornwall

#### Kyu Grade/Junior Competition & Ref. Course

Saturday 21st Nov. at Matravers School, Springfield Rd, Westbury, BA13 3QH

克己松涛館空手



# Kanku Sho Kata Bunkai Course

Cheltenham –29th March 2009

BEFORE we begin to talk about Mark Carroll's excellent Kata Bunkai course, let's ask the basic question: Why do you train in Karate?

An odd question to ask you may think, but your answer matters because it defines what you want from your training and that defines what you get from Mark's courses.

I cannot talk for anyone else so let's talk about my favourite subject – Me! Over the time I have trained in Karate what I want from it has changed. When I was younger I wanted to win competitions but after a while I realised that the constant hunt for cheap medals was bad for my karate and bad for me.

I then trained for advancement through the grade system but realised that this as a reason for training was as false as competition was.

I began to doubt what I was being taught, I realised that even in so called 'traditional' karate schools, the heart of karate as a martial art, was being lost. It was being replaced by a soulless series of punches and kicks taught by instructors who had never been in a fight in their lives.

I began to search for something better and as luck would have it I found it in Katsu-Mi Kai Shotokan Karate, for me my martial art is now defined – 'why do I train? To learn how to fight.

I'm not ashamed of wanting to learn to fight; in my view why else do karate? The self control that epitomises karateka can only come from a confidence in ourselves: in our abilities and our instructors'. Sensei Mark Carroll and my training partners have given me back confidence in my karate – thank you.

**Kanku Sho Karate Bunkai Course:** 45 karateka from the Katsu Mi Kai Shotokan Karate Association met to train with Sensei Mark Carroll in the bunkai for the kata 'Kanku Sho'.

If you had not trained with Sensei Mark before you might be surprised to turn up for a kata course to find a dojo decked out with punch bags, kick shields and hook and jab mitts but to those of us who are used to his methods this was perfectly normal!

After a short warm up based around the muscle groups to be used in the lesson we moved into the initial combinations of the kata. The first 3 moves are supported blocks in 3 different directions executed in back stance. Sensei Mark's applications for these combinations showed instantly his unique approach to kata bunkai. If you go on 'You Tube' and type in 'kata bunkai' what you get is a collection of videos depicting karateka applying karate techniques from kata against other karate techniques. This is fine as a form of kihon practice but if you want your karate to be at the centre of your personal self defence system then your applications need to be against typical street attacks not set karate attacks. Sensei Mark showed us this by breaking the supported blocks down into a 2 piece cover and uppercut combination (which then flowed into other punches). We practiced this on each other, role playing the parts of defender and street assailant and then got the real feel of impact with the heavy bag.

After working the bunkai we broke down into pairs to practice the kata in its street form and its traditional form.

This approach to kata is, I believe, unique to Sensei Mark. 'Street kata' is effectively a shadowboxing session practicing the street application of the traditional kata (external visualisation). We then go back to the traditional kata (called 'dojo kata') and execute it in its formal way but visualising its street applications (internal visualisation). The difference in intensity shown in the traditional kata is palpable because those practicing can see in their mind's eye practical street applications not just disconnected techniques. This is zanshin for the 21st Century.

We moved on through the kata into the central combination of a

grab/strike, front kick, elbow strike, block, and punch combination. Sensei Mark brought this to life in a close range strike and knee combination that we practiced at different ranges with different types of partner. After a very intense period of knee strikes on kick shields some of those who perhaps weren't used to this intensity of training were blowing a bit, never mind only 5 more hours to go!

As we built the kata up both in its traditional form and its bunkai we began to understand it more as a fighting system, this kind of training connects you with the kata, it ceases to be just some this we do at gradings. This may be a modern approach but it completely enhances the traditional.

As the course continued Sensei Mark began to utilise Sensei Steve Manning to explain the jumps and turns within the kata. Whenever a kata has a turning jump within it Sensei Mark sees this as demonstrating that a throw has taken place (a much more reasonable explanation than the usual one of jumping over a sword!). The first throw was shown as moving in the clinch down to collapse the hip whilst simultaneously lifting the heel and dumping your opponent at your feet we then moved into a leg lock on the grasped leg. The move was practiced in pairs on mats and could have come straight out of a UFC fight an absolutely perfect application of a traditional technique. Conceptual lights were going on all over the dojo as we began to move with Sensei Mark and identify what he was working towards; another aspect that came out at this point was the back up technique application. Sensei Mark explained that the kata always provides a back up if things go wrong we then practiced a scenario which involved the leg lock failing which then brought on subsequent techniques from the kata that pushed the leg out of the way and delivered a strike to the groin.

After a break for lunch (during which some students took part in an impromptu Tai Chi Session with a very friendly local Gung Fu club) we returned to the dojo to revise the earlier session. After warming up the next bunkai to be covered majored on the more throwing techniques. Sensei Steve explained the deep stance and thrust needed to make the spectacular reaping throw work and we practiced it in pairs. Sensei Steve then enhanced it by explaining a neat little ankle pull that dumps the opponent in front of you just as you get him up on your shoulders. There were some big hits at this stage as a combination of enthusiasm and tiredness kicked in but enthusiasm never waned especially amongst the St Ives members who just seem to love a good ruck! My favourite bunkai came next and last, Kanku Sho's famous jumping kick and turn against an out stretched palm was developed as a kicking combination of a full Muay Thai style round kick and back kick combo, a very aggressive and effective bunkai to finish a classic course on.

In conclusion an excellent course which was very well received, providing lots to go away and practice. When you see the amount of bunkai and subsidiary training that can be generated from one kata you begin to understand Funakoshi Sensei's comment about 10 years one kata. Kata ceases to be tied in the mind to coloured belts and regains its place as the centre of an effective self defence system.

So why train Karate?: Yahara Sensei said, 'Philosophy – My karate has no philosophy I just want to knock my opponent out'.

I wouldn't go so far, but if we want to produce self confident, Zen calm karateka it is essential they understand and believe in their karate. This self belief can only be developed by hard karate training with instructors who have an intuitive understanding of the original war-fighting heart of karate.

Sensei Mark Carroll and the Katsu-Mi Kai seniors have this understanding; all I hope is that I can stand the pace.

Ossu, Joe Howe

**Sensei Mark Carroll, the Chief Instructor of Katsu-Mi Kai Shotokan Karate, is happy to answer questions regarding any aspect of Shotokan karate, such as kata, or Katsu-Mi Kai training, course details, etc. Please contact him on [mark@ajmenclosing.co.uk](mailto:mark@ajmenclosing.co.uk)**

**Please could Katsu-Mi members check their licences and make sure they are up-to-date**