

Can I Join In?



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Adaptive Martial Arts UK & Ireland

C an I join in? Is a question

heard everyday on playgrounds up and down the country! Sometimes it's met with, of course or maybe a no this isn't for you, or any response in-between.

Martial Arts clubs are very similar, most cater for the general population and offer fairly standard training, others are more specialised catering for those who want to fight in the ring or maybe more extremely those who want to work in the security industry.

What if I don't fit in to the perceived norm for those classes? What if I really want to be a Thai boxer but I've got cerebral palsy or I want to get into the octagon and fight but I have Downs syndrome? Now these may be extreme examples but believe me when I say there are people with these conditions who want to join in and train alongside everyone else.

So let's think about another example, what about someone on the Autistic spectrum who may never work on the 'Doors' but wants to train the same as and with those who do?

Now more than ever there are more and more martial arts clubs who cater for every facet of the arts, so surely the answer to my question is of course there is a place for everyone, but sadly this isn't true.

So how do we start to deal with the prejudices and obstacles that those with health difficulties both cognitive and physical have to deal with to participate in mainstream martial arts?

Well, how about gather a group of some of the country's top martial artists and hold a day where disabled and non disabled students can train and work together and learn from each other.

On the 24 November in Cambridge this is exactly what happened.

The 'Cornerstones' seminar was a day where the instructors who have been integral in the growth and strengthening of Adaptive Martial Arts UK & Ireland came together and taught what they do best. The day was open to everyone and all abilities, so we had people with and without disabilities, people who have studied Martial Arts for decades and some who have only just begun. All training and learning from one another!



On the mats with Shihan Ken Culshaw



The Cornerstones



Nasser Butt demonstrating the concept of spirals.

There were two areas, one with mats for the throwing and grappling and one for the standing arts, plus if the instructors weren't teaching a group session they were offering one to ones with anyone who had something specific they wanted to work on. One thing that everyone should know is that each and every one of the instructors gave their time and knowledge freely to help grow this idea that everyone can benefit from the Martial Arts.

So the day started and straight away there was an amazing energy in the room, Mark Adlington started with a warm up straight into some Tang Soo Do, I was really grateful to Mark for jumping straight in as he'd come along to train and we threw him in at the deep end as lots of people were struggling to find the venue, so were running a bit late.

We then had the legend that is Ken Culshaw on the mats and our great friend Nasser teaching structure and form from an internal arts point of view. These two men are probably two of the most consummate Martial Artists, I've ever had the pleasure of working with and it's an honour to call them friends, their knowledge is phenomenal and they teach and show their arts with a passion and understanding that is inspiring.

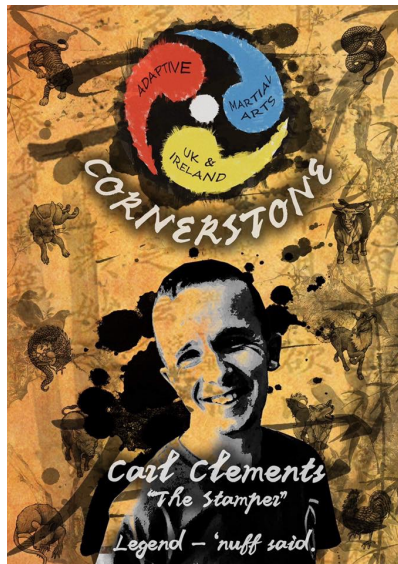
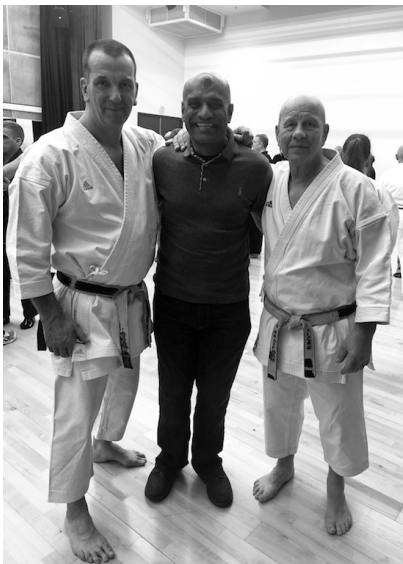
There was a palpable feeling in the room that this day was going to be something special, the calibre of the

people teaching and the enthusiasm of the students was wonderful. Next up on the mats we had the 'General' himself - Tony Bailey - who had come up after working a night shift and was going back to do another that night, for which we're extremely grateful as Tony is so well respected in the martial arts community that to have him at our event was a real honour. He showed his true measure by gearing his segment around Carl 'The Stamper' Clements and a few of the other students who needed a bit of extra help and allowing them, to throw him and really engage with them. On the floor Jay Dobrin and Phil Chenery were working their magic with blades, if you ever want to get a real understanding of knives given the ever increasing rise in knife crime and stabbings then Jay and Phil must be on your list of people to train with as they've spent a lifetime studying and working with 'live' blades and they truly are Masters of their craft.

I must say as well as the incredible line up of instructors teaching we had Grandmaster Brian Jones casting his eye over proceedings and though he didn't teach, there was a constant stream of people asking his opinion and hoping to gain an insight from probably one of the first non-Asians to practice Wing Chun and the man who introduced Latossa Escrima to this country as well as his knowledge of Tai Chi he learned in the Far East during his military service.



Tony 'The General' Bailey & Nasser Butt taking on the mighty Carl 'The Stamper' Clements!





Grandmaster Brian Jones

‘Cornerstones Instructors’ he would have been with us on the day but his continuing fight with his health just wouldn’t allow it. He may not have been with us physically but his presence was everywhere in the room. I’m eternally grateful to Tony for his support and friendship because we would not be as recognised as we are today without his support. The second is Carl Clements who was the original inspiration behind what we do, I may teach him martial arts but he teaches me about how to accept and be thankful for what we have, so to that end we decided to make him a ‘Cornerstones Instructor’.

Thank you to everyone who made it such a special day and we look forward to welcoming you all to the next one.

To round the day off, we had another pairing of instructors that was unique and special to us. Robbie Woodard and Keith Priestley, two absolute stalwarts of our association and of Karate, who between them have fought and won numerous world titles and trained under some of the biggest names in the traditional Karate world. They took the students back in time, to when they had learned from the Japanese in the early days of Karate in the UK and showed how tough and brutal training was in those days. Though it might have seemed harsh and militaristic, I think most of the students really enjoyed it as by the end of their session they had built everyone up and the smiles on people’s faces said it all.

I can honestly say that we put these events on every year and this one rates as one of the best we’ve put on. It was a unique event that helped cement the bonds that have formed over years not through financial or other gain but through the genuine friendships that have been made and a desire to achieve a common goal which is to bring the benefits of Martial Arts to everyone regardless of ability.

So we finished the day with the obligatory group photos and thank-yous but I wanted to acknowledge two people who have taught me so much not just as a Martial Artist and teacher but as a human being. The first was Tony Pillage who has been a huge supporter of ours and who actually suggested the concept of the



World Class: Shihan Keith Priestley & Robbie Woodard