

We were one of the first groups to use the new community centre, back in 1986. In those days we just had the Wednesday evening slot and had to use other venues until the Monday evening became available. We've seen a new extension built, a doctors' surgery appear, storage pods in the main hall, 3 sets of hall lighting, a new kitchen, a new floor, and a few etceteras, but essentially it's still the same (like Trigger's broom) and works for us - thanks to the efforts of the centre's staff throughout the years.

During our 20 years, over 30 of our students have attained the coveted Black Belt, and many others who have left for other places (some as far away as Australia), have also gained their Black Belt at other clubs. The TAGB (Tae Kwon-Do Association of Great Britain), founders of Tae Kwon-Do International have over 25,000 members in the UK and affiliations to many countries throughout the world – so it's no surprise when students we haven't seen for many years still pop in and see us and sometimes train with us. It's even better when they move back into the area and return to training, as with two of our senior Black Belts. Sometimes club members disappear to university, and reappear after a few years to continue training.

Our style of teaching has evolved over the years and become more 'Westernised' from the days when I was a student. Instructors are now teachers and there is a really friendly atmosphere in the club - there is less of the blood and tears, but still plenty of sweat. The TAGB Instructors' courses now focus a lot on safety, child protection, insurance, and a host of other paperwork we have to take care of. Although our numbers are relatively small, the size of the TAGB means that we are used in several advertising promotions from diverse areas such as Nestle and Matalan.

The Badger Farm 'Battery' hall has been the scene of many of our public demonstrations, including the opening celebration for the Centre back in '86. Those who took part in an Autumn Fair demonstration will still remember our interesting entrance, when about 15 of us emerged from the cupboard – it certainly got the spectators' attention. Other may recall doing press-ups in Sainsbury's car park on a Saturday afternoon!

There have been many high points in our time here, and a few lows.

It's always a high point for our students when they pass their grading and achieve something into which they have put a lot of hard work, especially reaching Black Belt. Personal development is also encouraged for TAGB Instructors. In advancing from 1st Dan 20 years ago, to 5th Dan now, I was disappointed to fail my 3rd Dan grading the first time, but then delighted to be awarded marvellous trophies for the best Black Belt Grading at both 4th Dan in 1994 and then 5th Dan in 2003. I was just as proud when our senior student, Darren Cooper, achieved his 5th Dan; and in October our children's class teacher, Vic Whitlock, gained his 4th Dan. We should also mention our great sense of satisfaction when we see hitherto very shy students one year later having the confidence to stand in front of the class and take the warm-up.

Our lowest point was the death of one of our Black Belts to stomach cancer, but we still remember him with our annual charity fund raising demonstration, which his family attend. Our modest sum, together with collections from other clubs throughout the South West raised over £30,000 for cancer charities last year.

As we look forward to the next 20 years we continue to think of BFOBCA as our 'home'. We are part of the community. For example our Secretary, Elizabeth, since hanging up her black belt is now Secretary to the Community Association Committee.

We wish the Community Association all the very best for the future and for anybody wishing to join us: phone 023 80267771, email winchestertkd@tiscali.co.uk, or web www.winchestertkd@tiscali.co.uk

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