

Featured Dojo-cho, October 2007



David Gay

Aikido of Wales, South Wales, UK
Division 1

I started practicing aikido with Niel Williams Sensei in 1984 and continued with Kevin Short Sensei under Chiba Sensei with the United Kingdom Aikikai. There has been aikido in Caerphilly since 1968; the sensei at that time was Jim Williams under Ken Williams Sensei. My first sensei was Neil Williams (Jim's son) who studied under Masamichi Noro Sensei and Chiba Sensei. Kevin Short Sensei took over the dojo in 1987 as this time we were with the UKA under Chiba Sensei.

In 1992 I was left the dojo by Kevin Short Sensei, who went to live in Germany. Currently the dojo has about 15 senior members and 10 juniors.

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

In 1994 came my most memorable moment in aikido. Saito Sensei's visit to the U.K. opened my eyes to Iwama Ryu Aikido. His precision, power and humour were like a breath of fresh air. In that moment I realised this was my way forward. The weapons system tied in a lot of what was missing from my aikido and created a new form in my body.

On the same course I met Matthew Hill Sensei, who had just spent 18 months in Iwama, and to my delight he was running classes 3 times a week only 30 minutes from my home. In 1995 I

became an Iwama Ryu Shodan.

In 1996 I met Pat Hendricks Sensei on a seminar in Poole, UK. During this period Matthew Hill left to pursue a career in the army and in 1999 I first went to San Leandro as Uchi Deshi to Pat Hendricks Sensei. I have returned 3 times since and have hosted Pat Sensei in Wales 3 times.

In 2003 I received my San Dan from Pat Sensei and in 2005 went as uchi deshi to Hitohiro Saito Sensei in Iwama. On my last visit to San Leandro in August 2006 I taught on the CAA meeting as the Division 1 representative. In May of this year I was invited to teach on the Memorial Day Gasshuku in San Diego and was asked to do a yondan demonstration at the earliest opportunity, which happened to be on Pat Sensei's seminar in Salisbury, UK, in July.

I have been fortunate to have had fantastic teachers who have also been my friends and this continues with Pat Sensei. The strength of my aikido remains in the basics as taught by Saito Sensei in a very traditional format.