



## BLOOMSBURY AIKIDO CLUB NEWSLETTER

March 2017 Issue 2017-1

### **Bloomsbury Aikido Club (BAC) Weekly Classes to Move to Cotswolds**

Most of you will have seen on the website Facebook: I have decided to relocate weekly Bloomsbury Aikido classes to the Cotswold region, where I am able to teach each week. Possible venues are being considered. The recently established Bloomsbury Aikido Club Friday class at The Upper Room has been discontinued because it has become unsustainable. BAC is no longer able to have a qualified coach present every week. In this situation, we are not able to recruit new members (we were about to advertise on e.g. Google and locally) and build up class numbers so as to collect sufficient class training fees to cover the room hire fees.

### **Rejuvenation of UCLU Aikido Club**

In January 2017, four young senior grades of the Bloomsbury Aikido Club achieved their BAB CL1 coach qualification. Younger teachers are the future of Aikido and this gave me the opportunity to pass on my role as a UCLU Aikido club coach to Kris Zymła 1<sup>st</sup> Dan, my student and member of the club since a beginner in 2009; and to Andy Washbrook 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan, UCL Alumnus and a member of UCLU Aikido 1995-2000, Ara Schorsch-Petcu 1<sup>st</sup> Dan and Fr. Tom Plant 1<sup>st</sup> Kyu who joined Bloomsbury in 2016. I see this as an important development for Aikido in the south-east. There, as in the rest of Britain, the Aikido community has been a gradually ageing population, with too few young teachers and too few women teachers. While experience is a benefit, if more young men and women are to be brought into Aikido, they need some vigorous practice and a good mix of ages amongst the teachers, to encourage their progress. It is timely for the next generation to take over at UCL, to help bring in far more young practitioners from the student community and outside.

Throughout January and February the four new UCLU Aikido coaches did a brilliant job at building up, consolidating and inspiring the UCL student membership of the UCLU club. Unfortunately, Kris, who has been such a support to Bloomsbury Aikido and to me, especially after the challenging years following the demolition of the traditional Dojo in 2013, had suddenly to return to Poland at the end of February. He is still with us in spirit and on Facebook! Andy, Ara and Tom are continuing the good work.

### ***So what is the role of Bloomsbury Aikido in London now?***

#### **A Reminder of the Background**

*Origins as Student Society:* Bloomsbury Aikido originated as a student club, the 'UCLU Aikido Club', which was founded by UCL student Barry Hutchinson in 1976. Aikido was already being practised at UCL from 1975, including by UCL postgraduate student Peter Goldsbury who taught at the club for several years. I was a UCL student, joining the club in 1977 and stayed on, becoming a member of staff, until 2010. In the period 1999 -2010 I managed the



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BF gym. My presence provided continuity for the club and support at the BF for martial arts activities in general.

*Bloomsbury Fitness Martial Arts:* In 2004 the club changed status from a student-run society to a Bloomsbury Fitness martial arts activity – the ‘Bloomsbury Aikido Club at Bloomsbury Fitness’, as it was later named – run by the Bloomsbury Aikido Club Head of Dojo. All club instructors taught for free and in return, there were no room hire fees. Membership of the club was no longer just restricted to students and UCL alumni but was open to any member of the BF, which includes the public.

*Under Threat:* From 2013 there arose a different management structure at the BF and it was hostile to the Aikido Club. The traditional dojo was demolished in December 2013; the BF martial arts activity programme was closed down in September 2014. Aikido survived at UCL because the club’s students pre-empted the closure of the Bloomsbury Aikido classes by applying to re-establish the student society - UCLU Aikido. However, there were “misunderstandings” on the part of UCLU with the club’s application for affiliation resulting in the granting of affiliation being delayed for an entire academic year. During this time, classes were allowed to continue but under a transitional status, neither a BF activity nor a recognised student club. Under this status, the club was unable to advertise itself and this seriously impeded the recruitment of new members.

*Revival – and two clubs from one:* The revived UCLU Aikido Club was not able to begin functioning normally as an affiliated club of UCL Union until the start of the 2015/16 academic year. After 2014 the Bloomsbury Aikido Club carried on in the role of an alumni counterpart to the new UCLU Aikido Club. Therefore, where pre-Sept. 2014 there had been one club, post- Sept. 2014 there were two associated clubs, with BAC administering for the alumni and community members of the old BF Aikido Club. Bloomsbury Aikido hired rooms in Camden for its own weekly classes in October-December 2014 and October 2016 – February 2017. For the rest of the time, BAC members joined in the UCLU Aikido classes.

*Associations:* In the early days the club was part of the Aikikai of Great Britain and later the British Aikido Federation. In 1994 the club joined the United Kingdom Aikikai. The revived UCLU Aikido Club, in 2015/16, joined together with the one-year old UCLU Shodokan Aikido Club so together to be able to meet the Union’s criterion of a minimum of 30 UCL student members. The student president that year was Paul Magee of Eigoku Bansen Kai (EBK) association so the UCLU Aikido Club was offering classes in Aikikai (UKA and later Goshinkai) Aikido, Traditional (EBK) Aikido and the competitive Shodokan Aikido. In 2016, Bloomsbury Aikido was one of the founder members of the new GoShinKai Aikido association. Goshinkai is a member of the British Aikido Board and has applied to Hombu, Aikikai Foundation, Japan for recognition.



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*A new chapter:* Now, in 2017 the Bloomsbury Aikido and UCLU Aikido clubs are each embarking on a new chapter in the story of Aikido for UCL.

### **Membership of UCLU Aikido Club**

A UCLU society, by UCLU rules, is student-led and membership is officially restricted to UCL students (the voting membership) and under specific terms, other students and UCL alumni and staff. The latter group do not have a vote in club affairs such as the election of club officers and have to pay an extra fee of £25 for associate membership of UCLU plus the club membership fee which in the case of UCLU Aikido is £10 (social membership, see below) – this is separate from the Aikido association fee. Officially, a UCLU club is a ‘members only’ club, though UCLU seems not to monitor club session attendance that closely. In 2016/17 UCL students pay £30 to join the club which covers the association membership/insurance fee for which the club treasurer arranges payment to the association. There is also a ‘social membership’ option costing £10 for non-practitioners or for those who arrange their own association fee payment.

[www.uclu.org/clubs-societies/aikido-club](http://www.uclu.org/clubs-societies/aikido-club)  
<http://uclu.org/clubs-societies/resources>

[www.uclu.org/clubs-societies/join-club-or-society](http://www.uclu.org/clubs-societies/join-club-or-society)

### **Membership of Bloomsbury Aikido Club**

The BAC is led by its chief instructor. From 1 February 2017, there is a £5 annual membership fee to the club plus the Goshinkai membership/insurance fee. There are no fees for non-practising, social members, i.e. ‘Friends of BAC’. Membership is open to anyone over 18 years of age. In London, the club fee is needed to go towards the costs of the website, venue insurance, the shortfall in training fees collected to cover Upper Room hire (presently standing at £120) and towards a fund for organising and hosting courses in London.

### **Bloomsbury Aikido Club’s Activity and Role in London Now**

BAC is a UCL Alumni Aikido Group Club. Its function in London is as an alumni counterpart to the UCLU Aikido Club. The BAC, together with the UCL Alumni Aikido Group aims to “conserve the flame” of Aikido for the UCL community.

- BAC administers for *alumni and community practitioners* and for those who may be ineligible (see above) to join UCLU Aikido.
- BAC *supports UCLU Aikido*: BAC chief instructor is the GSK Shido-in for the club; BAC has provided UCLU Aikido club with coaches; BAC has long experience of UCLU and has been able to advise UCLU Aikido on solutions to various problems which might threaten UCLU Aikido’s continuity.
- BAC will continue to hold and host one day *courses* in London 2-3 times per year and possibly courses held over a weekend for specific purposes such as preparation for Kyu or Dan grading. This year BAC is hosting a GSK Teachers’ course in May and the UCL Alumni Group & Friends 2017 Reunion in July. BAC will also hold courses at which I will be teaching and at which we invite the GSK Principal and other senior teachers. We may be able to hire the Upper Room for these sessions but I am also looking for other venues

with mats. If the current management at the BF were to change, I would be looking into hiring the BF Studio for courses, as we used to pre-2014.

**N.B.** People wishing to practise with BAC must have valid insurance.

- BAC acts as a *hub for the UCL Alumni Aikido & Friends Group*.
- The BAC *website* also carries a page for the UCL Alumni Aikido Group and hosts information for the UCLU Aikido Club (while the latter's website is under development).

UCL Alumni Aikido and Friends Group works with the Bloomsbury Aikido Club to provide opportunities for members of the UCL community to practise Aikido. The Bloomsbury Aikido Club is an Alumni (Aikikai Aikido) counterpart of the revived (in 2014/15) UCLU Aikido Club.

AIKIDO HAS BEEN PRACTISED AT UCL SINCE 1975  
FOR NEWS, TRAINING, EVENTS, CLUB HISTORY GO TO  
[www.bloomsburyaikido.co.uk](http://www.bloomsburyaikido.co.uk)



To come:

**Issue 2017 – 2** will include an article on the UCL Alumni Aikido Group and Friends

Find the UCL Alumni Aikido & Friends Group on [Facebook](#)

Find the UCL Alumni Aikido Group on

<http://www.bloomsburyaikido.co.uk/ucl-alumni-aikido-group/>

<https://aoc.ucl.ac.uk/alumni/alumni-community>