

Chinese Cultural Group Merton

Celebrating...



Summer 2012



Summer this year, we are marking 60 years of The Queen's reign, the **Diamond Jubilee**, celebrations will centre around an extended weekend in 2012 on 2, 3, 4 and 5 June.

Also, many are counting down to the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games which will be taking place in London and across the UK and we should be proud to INSPIRE A GENERATION at the Olympic Games 27 July – 12 August 2012. There will be no social meeting for us on the first week of June and during August. So let's celebrate and enjoy these special events. For more information and schedule of these events please visit <http://www.thediamondjubilee.org/>, www.london2012.com

~ Lee

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WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

– Eugene Byrne

The Committee has been meeting regularly as usual. We have completed an examination of our situation by analysing what are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (a "SWOT analysis"), as a tool to help us to decide what we should do to exploit or address, as the case may be, each of these. Our main threat, if you like, is a slight decline in attendance and this is difficult to address: your ideas would be welcome, either at the forthcoming AGM or otherwise.

The Committee continues to contribute, but we would welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Sharing experience on our visit to China

Chinese Society

From Mona Curtis's grand-daughter, Natalie Ellis, who is currently working in Beijing.

I have now passed the half a year milestone in China, and am preparing myself for the infamous Beijing summer: the rise in temperature and numerous rain storms in April.

Representing the British Universities in recruiting Chinese students in China, my work in the Marketing department mostly focuses on student recruitment and developing strong relationships with Chinese consultants and the British universities we represent.

I returned to the office today after a 4 day weekend to celebrate 劳动节, Labour Day. Surprisingly I had the entire four days off – normally if there is a holiday for a few days during the week most staff work at the office over the weekend to make up for it! This habit perfectly represents the Chinese work ethic. My colleagues would stay at the office until nine o'clock most evenings to finish something that has no urgent deadline. Unfortunately I have had to adapt to this mentality and worked a seven day week for eleven weeks before I had a weekend off. However, April was a quieter month and I had some weekends to explore Beijing's less famous attractions. I was particularly excited to see Xinjian, Mongolia, Harbin and Sichuan on the destination list for my forthcoming business trips!

I received an email from the Chopsticks Club (a China orientated business networking club based in

London) advertising a job in Shanghai recently, and sent in an application. Holland & Barrett, the British Health chain, are opening four new branches in Shanghai, recruiting Chinese speaking English staff to oversee the English language side of setting up, as well as to work in store as a health advisor to Chinese customers. I enjoy my work and am not genuinely considering leaving, but the curiosity to see how possible it would be for me to get more work and remain in China longer compelled me to apply!

Next week I have a weeklong trip to Japan to attend a friend's wedding, and shortly after a visit from my mum. Although I get on very well with my colleagues and stop to chat with many locals I have got to know, it is hard to make new friends in large Chinese cities and can be very lonely – letters and emails become very precious!

An Orchestra to play in Beijing

The experience of a Professional Musician going with an Orchestra to play in Beijing

(From Alex's friend on the 28 April 2012)

We arrived in Beijing yesterday morning and I could not believe the difference since I was last here in 1979. The airport is vast and bears no resemblance to the one that we arrived at with London Festival Ballet (now called English National Ballet) all those years ago.

We've had a wonderful welcome and everyone in the Orchestra has thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We were playing right next to the Olympic Stadium on the Olympic Green. The stadium is really impressive and we were performing for the closing ceremony of the 2nd Beijing International Film Festival. I am just so thrilled that I have managed to return to China after all these years - the Chinese people are so welcoming and friendly.

Chinglish!

From Paul Hider

An amusing
mis-translation





DEALING WITH “GUANXI” (关系)

“Guanxi” – when I mention this word to my students, there is inevitably a giggle or a gasp. In shock, one may ask, “You know about Guanxi?” as if it were some well-kept secret of Chinese culture. “Guanxi” exists everywhere in some form, but in China it’s a daily part of life and, alongside money, the main way to get things done. So what is it? “Guanxi” literally means “relationships” or “connections”. It’s the whole “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” thing. Looked at positively, it manifests as paying for a meal with friends in the knowledge that they will pay for the next one, or introducing a friend to someone else you know who can help them with something, or getting some necessary thing efficiently without having to wade through endless red tape and bureaucracy. At it’s most negative, it’s expensive gifts on Teachers’ Day to ensure that your child is treated fairly through the term, or gifts to officials to get them to do what they should be doing anyway, or even facilitating payments of “black money” to gain business advantages. Certainly in the UK we are aware of “old boy networks”, “putting in a good word for someone” or various subtle acts of nepotism and, dare I say it, bribery. But I guess the difference is that in the West it is generally frowned upon and open to scrutiny when discovered. In China it’s a way of life. Here, if you have guanxi, you can skip queues, get to see a powerful person directly without having to work

your way through a hierarchy, or generally get better treatment. Without guanxi life gets a lot more difficult.

Do I personally use the intrinsic guanxi I have as a foreigner? For sure. Do I feel a bit guilty about that? Certainly. But if I can see a hospital’s bone specialist after 10 minutes because his colleague’s child goes to my school (instead of a half-day wait to see a junior doctor) I’m afraid I will. If my school can get a teacher’s visa processed in time by taking an official out for a friendly dinner, it’s worth their while. And if my wife needs to use her customer’s contacts to find out why the lease on her shop is suddenly being threatened, she does. It might be easier and fairer for every transaction in China to be transparent and even-handed, but that’s probably a long way off. In my experience, Chinese people claim to hate the “guanxi system” but continue to use it to their advantage when they need to. It’s an aspect of Chinese culture which I find fascinating, frustrating and, at times, extremely fortunate!



Taiji Qigong Shibashi ^{*(1)} / Tai Chi Chi Kung Shibashi^{*(2)}



We have tried so hard. At last, we can give you the good news that we have found a leader who will be with us on a regular basis for our Tai Chi sessions. Welcome to **Maureen Carroll** who has gallantly volunteered to take us on. Maureen has had formal training with two masters in Taiji Quan /Tai Chi Chuan, commonly known as Tai Chi, an internal martial art practised in China for the last 500 years. She has for the last eight years been part of the Bishop Ho-Ming-Wah group practising Taiji Qigong Shibashi at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church.

We at our Chinese Cultural Group Merton have been practising Taiji Qigong Shibashi too, as you are aware. Taiji Qigong Shibashi is an extract of the best 18 movements from Yang style Taiji Quan. It is a set of soft and gentle exercises synchronising movement with breathing and meditative techniques. It was

Membership renewal reminder

We would like to remind you our annual membership fee is due on the 1st of April.

Some members have not yet renewed their membership for the year. Our Treasurer looks forward to receiving more completed application forms soon. Renewal application forms were sent out with the Spring Newsletter but if you have mislaid your copy, just give Ivy a ring on 020 8542 9154.

introduced by Professor Lin Hou-Sheng in China in 1979, including the basic elements of weight-shifting, co-ordination, and hand and leg movements together with controlled breathing. The gentle rocking motions and stretching movements improve circulation and digestion. The chest exercises and controlled breathing are good for lung conditions and asthma. The overall effect of the exercises is in reducing mental stress and physical tension, thus improving general wellbeing of the practitioner.

So far, we have covered only the first section of four in the set of exercises. The whole four sections take about an hour to complete. Shibashi is so gentle and deeply relaxing that it could be used as a warm up for other Taiji forms.

Glossary:

Qi	= inner energy
Qigong	= a system of breathing exercises
Quan / Chuan	= fist / shadow boxing
Shibashi	= 18 movements
* (1)	= in Mandarin
* (2)	= in Cantonese

Maggie Woo

Points to ponder

On 15th May Eugene Byrne gave a talk which referred to - among others - Chiang Kai-Shek - who is quoted as saying these words "The life of our people will be elevated if we live artistically; we will become wealthy if we live productively and we will be safe if we lead a military way of life." I am not sure whether Switzerland - or most of us - would agree with the last part of this.

However we could all discuss the statement by Zhuang Zi 莊子 (Warring States Period) : "All men strive to grasp what they do not know, while none strive to grasp what they already know; and all strive to discredit those things in which they do not excel. That is why there is chaos."

Alex Roney

Kun Qu 昆曲

The Art of Kunqu Opera performance was enjoyed by both the members of the Drake House Club and the Chinese Culture Group on 3rd May 2012. Ms Kathy Hall performed with great enthusiasm and aplomb (<http://www.londonjungkunopera.co.uk/core.htm>). It was truly an eye-opener. She performed a short excerpt from The Foolish Dream-a tale of a woman who divorced her husband for a richer man. The dream was about her moral mind set.

Kunqu (曲; pinyin: Kūnqǔ; Wade-Giles: k'un-ch'ü), also known as Kunju (崑劇), Kun opera or Kunqu Opera, is one of the oldest extant forms of Chinese opera and was listed as one of the first 19 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' 人类非物质文化遗产杰作 by UNESCO in May 2001. A form of Chinese musical drama which combines play, opera, ballet, poetry recital, and musical recital.

In the performance of Kunqu, it involves three elements working in harmony: words, music and dance. The words are elaborate poems of high literary quality. Kunqu music is based on the Qupai principle, that is to say, the poetic passages of the play are written to fit a large number of fixed tunes. The movements of the dance involve not only the body but also the costume (especially the sleeves), and objects held in the hand, such as a fan. The costumes are of

course elaborate and befitting the role. The language of Kunqu is not the dialect of Kunshan or Suzhou, nor is it standard Mandarin. It is an artificial stage language, a modified Mandarin with some features of the local dialect. Kathy Hall gave a short description of the Kunqu Opera on BBC in September 2011: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-14401652>

Sissi Wong

Beef and Peppers in Black Bean Sauce

Serves 2-4

Ingredients needed:

3/4 pound steak (sirloin or flank is good), thinly sliced across the grain

Marinade:

1/2 teaspoon sugar

2 teaspoons soy sauce

2 teaspoons Chinese rice wine or dry sherry

1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Other:

2 bell peppers, 1 green and 1 orange or red

1 small onion & 2 cloves garlic

1 tablespoon Chinese fermented black beans or black bean sauce, or to taste

2 large slices ginger

4 tablespoons oil for stir-frying, or as needed

1/2 cup chicken stock or broth or water

Preparation:

(1) Add the marinade ingredients to the beef and marinate for 25 to 30 minutes.



(2) While the beef is marinating, prepare the vegetables. Remove the stems and seeds from the bell peppers and chop. Peel the onion and chop.

(3) Use a cleaver or knife to chop the beans into tiny pieces. Finely chop the garlic and ginger. Mix the chopped garlic with the black beans.

(4) Heat the wok over medium-high heat. Add 2 tablespoons oil. When the oil is hot, add the beef. Brown briefly, then [stir-fry](#) until it changes colour and is about 80 percent cooked. Remove the beef from the wok.

(5) Add 2 tablespoons oil. When the oil is hot, add the ginger and the garlic and bean mixture. Stir-fry briefly until aromatic. Add the onion. Stir-fry for about 3 minutes, then add the green pepper. Stir-fry for another minute, then add the remaining pepper.

(6) Pour in the chicken broth. Heat to boiling. Return the beef back into the pan. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for a few more minutes. Taste and season with salt, pepper or soy sauce if desired. Serve hot.

<http://chinesefood.about.com/o/d/cantonese cuisine/r/beefbeansauce.html>

Lee M

Hearing a Flute on a Spring Night in Luoyang By Li Bai

春夜洛城闻笛	Chūn Yè Luò Chéng Wén Dí
谁家玉笛暗飞声	Shuí jiā yù dí àn fēi shēng
散入春风满洛城	Sàn rù chūn fēng mǎn luò chéng
此夜曲中闻折柳	Cǐ yè qǔ zhōng wén zhé liǔ
何人不起故园情	Hé rén bù qǐ gù yuán qíng

From whose home secretly flies the sound of a jade flute?
It's lost amid the spring wind which fills Luoyang city.
In the middle of this nocturne I remember the snapped willow,
What person would not start to think of home!

Poem by Li Po also known as Li Bai



Next Quarterly Newsletter

Please email your experience with the Chinese people, culture, food or any interesting events you have been to that you would like to share in our newsletter.

Please email to surreylee@gmail.com.

CHINA

Photos from <http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/china/photos.html>

LARGEST LAKE IS SHRINKING Tourists ride camels near China's largest desert lake Hongjiannao in Yulin, north China's Shaanx province, Sept 24, 2011. Hongjiannao is shrinking as a result of climate change and human activities, and may vanish in a few decades. Its lake area, which measured more than 6,700 hectares in 1996, has shrunk to 4,180



hectares. Its water level is declining by 20-30 centimeters annually and its water PH value has risen to 9.0-9.42 from 7.4-7.8.

KUNQU OPERA Actors and actresses perform classical Kunqu Opera on a subway in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Sept 27, 2011. To promote Kunqu Opera, they are performing parts of three classical operas on the subway. [Photo/Xinhua]



Forthcoming CCGM programme

05/06/12	Bank Holiday: Queen's Diamond Jubilee:	Closed No team meeting
19/06/12	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Dragon Boat Festival: Cookery demonstration	Rosetta Chak Sissi Wong
03/07/12	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: The Long March 1935	Eugene Byrne
17/07/12	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Mahjong	R & D Chak Christina Yan
AUGUST	Summer Holiday	Closed

Chinese Cultural Group Merton

**Guild House
30/32 Worple Road
Wimbledon
SW19 4EF**
Please contact Helen, CCGM secretary
on 0208 846 0735 (Tue/Thur)