

The Southern Shaolin Wuzuquan Union of China

Competition and Cultural Event held in Quanzhou, Fujian Province

25th February to the 1st March 2010

One of the high points of the event / festival a trip to the Southern Shaolin Temple in Quanzhou, China.



The teams from the UK and Ireland had waited for no less than two years to go to China for this prestigious event. It was going to be bigger and better than previous years owing to it being the 20th Anniversary of the International South Shaolin Wuzuquan Union based in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China. There was to be over 400 competitors from more than 20 countries in attendance. Our teams were ready and looked forward to going to China at long last.

Background.

The following information provides background for the event and has an extract from a correspondence direct from the Quanzhou Association for Wushu, Fujian, China to all participating countries...

In June 2008, the State Council for the Peoples Republic of China duly issued that South Shaolin Wuzuquan be included in the state levelled intangible heritages of humanity. The Party Committee and the Government of Quanzhou Municipality have not only highly appreciated the great contributions done by the International General Sodality of the South Shaolin Wuzuquan for the past 20 years in the safeguard, saving, delivery and development of the Wuzuquan but showed great concern for the development of the Sodality. This very "Minnan Cultural Festival" involves very wide range of great interests. Besides the South Shaolin Wushu, it covers various intangible cultural heritages such as dramas, Nanyin (the Southern music), the tea culture, porcelain culture, puppet show, the stone carving arts and so on. Friends from all over the world will be invited to attend the unprecedented grand occasion. It has been a rare opportunity to take the celebration of the International General Sodality of the South Shaolin Wuzuquan as an important part of the "Minnan (South Fujian) Cultural Festival", which will add luster to the celebration of the International Sodality.

[Extract from a letter to all participating countries]

What does this mean? Simply put, it means that there are only 3 martial arts organisations in China recognised by the All China Sports: The Chinese Wushu Association, The Chinese Taiji Association and the International Nan Shaolin Wuzuquan Union. These 3 organisations issue their own grading awards and do not recognise any awards issued by other organisations in the world.

The format for the celebrations between the 25th February and the 1st March included the following...

- An open celebration ceremony.
- Electing the new Chairman.
- Preliminary elections for the proposal of the new Chairman in 2012.
- A ceremony for the first international release of the book called "The Manual of Wuzuquan".
- An international academic exchange / forum for Southern Shaolin Wuzuquan ideas and techniques.
- Setting up a ranking system of Wuzuquan. Confirming and releasing the FIRST batch of high rank players.
- Holding a Wushu parade of activities and joint performances for the South Shaolin Wuzuquan.
- Holding an international invitational tournament for the South Shaolin Wuzuquan.

The Event / Competition.

After a very tiring journey which began in Heathrow on the 23rd of February we arrived at the Overseas International Hotel in Quanzhou at approx 1am on the 25th February 10. Members of the hotel staff were kind enough to provide some refreshments before we went to our rooms for a well-deserved rest. We needed to be up for a 6:30am training session then off to breakfast. After a brief look around the city of Quanzhou we were taken to the stadium to practice for the opening ceremony celebrations due the following day.

Travelling to the Overseas International Hotel in Quanzhou, Fujian, China.



Rehearsals for the Opening Ceremony

Friday 26th Feb 10

All of the Teams were invited to a very formal meeting in the mid-morning. The conference room in the hotel was full as the organisers announced that the government was endorsing the awarding of Dan grades in this the 20th anniversary of the International Nan Shaolin Wuzuquan Association. There were to be four grades available for selected masters and students, i.e. 10th Dan, 9th Dan, 8th Dan and 7th Dan. All of the representative countries had to put forward names for approval by the committee. The British and Irish contingents were awarded to following:

Grandmaster Kim Han (GB) – **10th Dan**

Richard Timmis (GB) – **8th Dan**

John Tuite (GB) – **8th Dan**

Nigel Gilham (GB) – **7th Dan**

Bob Bannon (Ire) – **7th Dan**



Grandmaster Han and Nigel Gilham receive their grades.

In addition to awarding of the new Dan grades, the committee also recognised the passing of the previous President and the election of the new President of the association, Master John Graham (9th Dan) of the USA.

Following this auspicious meeting, all of the guests were asked to meet outside the hotel for the group photo before going to lunch.

Some group photos prior to the big group photo.



After lunch, everybody was ferried to the competition stadium on coaches with police escorts. This made us feel very important and something of a celebrity. The teams from each country lined up behind their banners to be marched into the stadium for the opening speeches and ceremony.



Lining up outside the stadium



Spectacular performances inside the stadium

The organisers told us that there were no events for us to take part in that evening so we were taken back to the hotel for dinner. However, we discovered the following day that the short weapons category had taken place that evening!!! We had three people in that event.

Saturday 27th Feb 10

With the exception of Nigel who was the team coach, we were ready to compete all day today. Nigel had a lot of work ahead of him to sort out the events for each of our competitors. The program was all in Chinese and the language was Mandarin. This made for slow going so Nigel enlisted the aid of the very kind Australian and Malaysian Teams, who both had people that could read Chinese. Nigel found he was able to communicate in 'broken' English, 'broken' Mandarin and even 'broken' Cantonese (to the amusement of his new Chinese friends). In addition to the assistance we received we had a lot of help from our own team members; Tracy Gilham, Ruth Burchell, Kevin Davies and Jonathan Humphreys who worked very hard to ensure the smooth running of the events for our competitors.

Everybody's events were registered and even the situation with the short weapons event the previous evening was satisfactorily sorted out. In the morning we saw Kevin, Andrew, John, Geoff and Alison perform their hand forms. It was particularly nerve wracking for Alison and Geoff who were competing for the first time. Everyone did well on the day and gained valuable experience for future events.

Geoff (left)
Alison (centre)
John (right)



Kevin Naughton – Baihe Si Men (Hand Routine) – **Gold**
Andrew Cole – San Zhan (Hand Routine) – **Silver**
John Keogan – Taizu San Zhan (Hand Routine) – **Silver**
Geoff Thompson – Er Shi Quan (Hand Routine) – **Achievement Certificate**
Alison Sneyd – Baihe San Zhan (Hand Routine) – **Achievement Certificate**

We were all ferried back to the hotel for a quick, light lunch before returning to the stadium for the next session. The afternoon performances included the forms for short weapons, where we saw the following:



Andrew (Sai)



John (Sai)



Kevin (Cane)

Andrew Cole – Sai Form (Shuang Chai) (Weapon Routine) – **Silver**
Kevin Naughton – Cane Form (Bian) (Weapon Routine) – **Bronze**
John Keogan – Sai Form (Shuang Chai) (Weapon Routine)

Following the end of the competition for the day and a dinner at the hotel, all of the guests were taken to a televised show at massive indoor stadium. It was approximately an hour from the hotel. There were thousands of people and the whole show was part of the festivities for the event that were shown over China on the CCTV network.



Pictures of the show

Sunday 28th Feb 10

The competition this morning consisted of the Forms for the category C (age 39 to 59) and the set sparring for hands and weapons routines.



Three photos of Nigel and Cole (Set Spar)



Nigel and John (Set Spar)

Nigel Gilham – Shuangtui (Hand Routine) – Bronze

Nigel Gilham / Andrew Cole – San Zhan San Shou Dui Tao (Pre-set sparring) – Bronze

Nigel Gilham / John Keogan – Er Shi Quan San Shou Dui Tao (Pre-set sparring) – Bronze

Then it was all back to the hotel for lunch followed by trip to the Quanzhou Museum to be guests at a formal tea ceremony then to the Southern Shaolin Temple in Quanzhou.

We were all taken to the Quanzhou Museum first where a very special tea ceremony was to take place. It was truly amazing with many tables set aside for the guests from overseas. There was a stage with various acts and scenes taking place for the cultural part of the ceremony. We were all very honoured and made to feel very special by the organisers.



Teams arrive at the Museum, Quanzhou



Posing with the children from the show



With the Chinese organisers



Sitting down to an amazing tea



Two 'new friends' that wanted a picture



Our good friend
Xiao Feng

The trip the Shaolin Temple was more memorable for both John Keogan and Kevin Naughton being asked to demonstrate their forms and to watch many others demonstrate forms. Nigel was nervous but very pleased to be interviewed by Chinese television channel CCTV. We all considered the Shaolin Temple to be a very special place so we took many pictures to remember it by.



Posing at the Temple Gate



Nigel's interview with CCTV



Inside the Shaolin Temple Quanzhou

That evening direct from our visit to the Shaolin Temple, a fleet of coaches took us to a truly massive 'closing ceremony' banquet at an enormous hotel. We had our evening clothes with so we quickly changed in the toilets and made our entrance. There were a number of speeches and the handing out of commemorative gifts such as flags, bottles of wine and a very special straight sword from China. All of the teams were expected to sing a karaoke song for the hosts. The British and Irish wowed the crowd with 'We Will Rock You'. The party atmosphere was very infectious and everyone joined in to make a memorable closing ceremony.



Various pictures of the closing ceremony and the handing out of awards and mementos

Mon 1st Mar 10

On the Monday we were very preoccupied with posting our commemorative swords back to the UK. We were not able to carry them with us as we had two other destinations to reach before we returned home. It was with some difficulty that we managed this task and without the help of our good friends Master John Graham (USA) and Xiao Feng (China), we might not have managed it.

The group effort of wrapping the commemorative swords for the post.



Tue 2nd Mar 10

It was time to leave Quanzhou for the airport in Xiamen. Grandmaster Han had planned a short diversion to the Nanputo Temple near Xiamen. This place was of significant interest to us as we were able to visit one of the places that our late, much lamented Shizu Chee Kim Thong had trained in his youth.



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Some testimonials from the people that attended...

Shigong Han Jin Yuan (Grandmaster Kim Han)

The Chinese Wushu Association is using the International Nanshaolin Wuzuquan Union to gain experience on how to judge the traditional Chinese routines which is a very difficult task. Once the solution has been found, the Chinese Wushu association will introduce it to the international competition and scrap the present system. The International Nanshaolin Wuzuquan Union is still trying very hard to solve this problem. I am the only one so far from the international delegates who has contributed to solving this problem. I only wish the Chinese end is strong enough to ask the international community for suggestions.

Nigel Gilham (Coach)

I felt extremely privileged to be considered worthy enough to travel as Coach with Grandmaster Kim Han and the British and Irish Teams to this unparalleled event held in China. The Team performed with professionalism and consideration for their role as representatives of their countries. It is fair to say that the competition was very rewarding on many levels and I personally feel honoured to have made many new friends. I would like to thank everyone for the Team Spirit.

Tracy Gilham

It is a great experience to be invited and involved in such a big international competition, meeting so many friendly people from all over the world. We might not speak the same language but our common interest in the martial arts. Thank you Kim and Nigel for inviting me.

Andrew Cole

Being involved in an event on such a scale was a rare and inspirational experience. To be able to compete against individuals from many cultures and backgrounds is something I never thought I would have a chance to do and I would love the opportunity to do it again in the future.

John Keogan

Electric is one adjective that springs to mind when describing the feeling I had walking into the stadium and being hit by a wall of sound and an explosion of colour. Just being there was fantastic but being able to fly the flag for Five Ancestors UK, compete against the Shaolin Monks and demonstrate at the Temple was a rare Honour and I thank Sigong Han, Sifu Nigel Gilham and the Squad for making it possible and such a memorable experience.

Ruth Burchell

The event in China was a fantastic experience; the magnitude and sense of occasion was brilliant in particular the cultural demonstration by 100s of participants welcoming us to the event was unexpected, colourful and inspiring. The way the competition was organised meant competitors could focus on their event with the translators ensuring everyone was in the right place at the right time – their help was invaluable throughout. The organised trips provided a fascinating context to the cultural festival and gave the competitors a chance to relax. I can't wait to go again.....thank you

Geoff Thompson

Our Trip to china for the international Wuzuquan tournament coincided with the end of the celebration for Chinese New Year. One thing was most apparent when we arrived was that the people (trying) to organize the event meant to impress us. There were police escorts for our coaches for everywhere we went; from the 2000+ seated arena for our demos/competitions, to the stadium for the concert for the people of Quanzhou. We were left with the impression that investment in the region is massive and people are surprised to see us but very friendly when they are in our photos.

Jonathan Humphreys

China was completely amazing in an extremely inspirational way. The dedication and skill of all the competitors showed me what I do is a lot larger than my daily training. I hope to go again and show my improvement. I am grateful to my teachers Nigel and Tracy for inviting me and to Grandmaster Kim Han without whom the trip would not have been possible!

Links for Reference:

Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China
Festival / Competition Opening Ceremony **Part 1**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAJJ2cgeT2s>

Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China
Festival / Competition Opening Ceremony **Part 2**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3Y70Zqw9IQ>

Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China
Festival / Competition Opening Ceremony **Part 3**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BV0z3Yb1JYw>

Chinese Television News article...
British Team shown at the end of the article after the Shaolin monks.
<http://www.whatsonxiamen.com/ent1141.html>

Chinese Television News article...
More info about the festival in Quanzhou, China.
<http://www.whatsonxiamen.com/ent1167.html>

Right photo:
(Left to right)
Alison Sneyd (Ire)
Su Han (Supporter)
Jon Humphreys (GB)
Andrew Cole (GB)
Grandmaster Kim Han (GB)
Kevin Naughton (Ire)
Geoff Thompson (GB)
Ruth Burchell (GB)
Tracy Gilham (GB)
Nigel Gilham (Coach) (GB)
John Keogan (GB)
Kevin Davies (GB)



Left photo:
Teams posing at the gate of the
Southern Shaolin Temple,
Quanzhou, China.