



### **History of the British Aikido Association**

Tomiki Aikido began to be taught in the UK in the late 1950s under the tuition of Sensei Senta Yamada who was 6<sup>th</sup> dan Judo and 6<sup>th</sup> dan Tomiki Aikido. Senta Yamada had been taught aikido personally by both Morihei Ueshiba and Kenji Tomiki and was considered to one of Professor Tomiki's most talented students alongside Hideo Oba and Tsunako Miyake.

Sensei Yamada had been engaged by the British Judo Association to teach Judo, but he also began to offer Tomiki Aikido training to some of the older Judoka who were reaching the end of their competitive careers as an alternative activity containing a competitive element but became the opening to an extension to their Budo experience in this new (to them) activity. At this time Yamada taught the 15 basic techniques that then formed the basis of Kenji Tomiki's aikido system. This basic kata later evolved into the 17 techniques of the Junanahon Kata that the BAA practises today.

This led to an enthusiastic following, not exclusively for older judoka, and resulted in the formation of several clubs specifically for the study of Tomiki Aikido, which were independent of the British Judo Association.

In 1965 Sensei Yamada returned to Japan leaving about ten Tomiki Aikido clubs to be run by his students. Before leaving he graded several students to dan grade, these were John Wilkinson, John Waite, Bill Lawrence and Lee Ah Loi. At this time there was no specific syllabus of training or grading system in place, nor any particular relationship binding the clubs together.

In 1966 a Japanese businessman named Mr. Riki Kogure was transferred by his employers to London. He was a student of Master Tomiki and he took an interest in the fledgling group of clubs and became their Sensei to the great benefit of all the students.

Sensei Yamada urged the various clubs now under the tuition of Sensei Kogure to formalise their existence by forming an organisation for all the Tomiki Aikido clubs in the UK with Sensei Kogure as their Technical Adviser. This resulted in the founding of the British Aikido Association in that same year with the founder members being George Fischer, Jim Elkin, John Wilkinson, Kenneth Rowles, Alan Menzies, Marion Harvard, Len Mockford, and Bill Lawrence who all signed the first Constitution

The British Aikido Association prospered under the technical direction of Sensei Kogure and in order to assist him with his valuable work two more Japanese sensei arrived in 1968, these were Mr. Tsunamitsu Naito 4<sup>th</sup> dan and Mr. Takeshi Inoue 5<sup>th</sup> dan both direct students of Master Tomiki at Waseda University.

Sensei Naito was obliged to return to Japan less than a year later but during his stay he taught the Junanahon Kata of the first seventeen techniques of Tomiki Aikido, thus enabling all the member clubs to use this Kata as a common standard of training upon which to build the future development of Tomiki Aikido in the UK.

Sensei Inoue taught various Koryu Kata extending the scope of training as well as setting the common standard for all to aspire to in their training and remained in the UK until 1972. The Association owes a great deal to Sensei Yamada, Sensei Kogure, Sensei Inoue and Sensei Naito for the good foundations they laid for the development of Tomiki Aikido in the UK and the part they played should not be forgotten.



The first Championships of the British Aikido Association were held in 1969 with our three Sensei's as the Referees, a historic moment in our history.

Sensei Kogure awarded a number of dan gradings reflecting the development of the Association and remained the lead figure in Tomiki Aikido until his return to Japan 1969. Kogure Sensei can be pleased to know that the now properly constituted organisation of the British Aikido Association continued to prosper and grow as the result of his work leading to the spread of Tomiki Aikido far and wide in the UK.

In 1972 one of the Association's Senior Sensei, Brian Eustace, was invited to give a teaching session to a group of ten clubs based in the Midlands who were currently practising Aikido identified as "traditional" under the leadership of Mike Smith, the training was valued and exchange visits were made to Sensei Eustace's club in Stratford on Avon. This led to friendship developing to the extent that Mike felt able to explain to Brian that his group had recently had to terminate their connection to the Headquarters of Yama Arashi in Brussels, Belgium as the recent devaluation of the UK currency priced them out of the European group, and thus they did not belong to anybody! Mike Smith and his members very much admired the British Aikido Association and wanted an organisation they could join. There were other groups of traditional aikido in the UK, but none of them were attractive to the clubs Mike Smith led.

"We liked what Sensei Eustace had shown us so we invited him again in 1973, at the end of that day, having enjoyed another day with him Sensei Eustace, he told us that the British Aikido Association had discussed our situation and knowing that we had a high regard for Tomiki Aikido, but wished to remain traditional, that we could amalgamate our group of clubs as a traditional section of the British Aikido Association. We were delighted with this and as a consequence the ten clubs joined "en bloc" in late 1973/early 1974." (Mike Smith)

There were many mutual exchanges between the groups at Summer Schools and similar events and it came as no surprise that a number of Tomiki techniques were "stolen" and incorporated into the traditional clubs training, because they were considered better than what they were doing. The new clubs also liked the Kata competitions at the National Championships and decided to enter the "Open Kata" competition with excellent results. "We felt a sense of freedom and fellowship that we had never enjoyed before, we were proud to be part of the British Aikido Association." The open-minded attitude we found in the BAA led Mike to name the group "Kai Shin Kai"

In late 1974 a problem was developing; dishonest people were travelling about the UK claiming to be experts in various Martial Arts and deceiving people into allowing them to start classes in sports centres, schools and local village halls. These people were charging fees, selling gi, and so on. Eventually people became suspicious about these "Sensei" with the result that the instructors disappeared with the money!!

Several responsible organisations in Aikido and Karate got together and made an approach to the Sports Council (the Government Body responsible for sport in the UK, now Sport England) who had also been receiving complaints.

This resulted in a leafleting campaign by the Sports Council warning authorities about these false teachers and advising them to ensure that any instructors they employed were genuine. Whilst this helped with the problem, we felt that there needed to be an overall governing body that could provide documentation to prove a person was all that they

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claimed to be. At that time there was a Karate Control Board but it was less than effective, as it had no formal backing.

After further discussion with the Sports Council it was agreed to set up The Martial Arts Control Commission (MAC) and all the different Martial Arts would have representative members. This seemed like a good scheme and the BAA felt that this was the right direction to be going. One issue was that MAC expected the BAA to organise and run Aikido in the UK and required all other organisations to sign up to BAA membership! Mike Smith was given the task of contacting all the other groups to discuss this scheme and he found that these other organisations, all traditional Aikido did not want to be forced into joining the BAA!! He also soon discovered that these groups had realised that that after two years of enforced membership, they would have voting rights at the AGM and could soon "take over" the BAA. The danger here was that Tomiki Aikido, which these groups did not understand or respect could be marginalised and damaged. This could not be ignored so a proposal was put to the Executive of the BAA that we should seek a harmonious relationship with the other Aikido groups by creating an Aikido Control Board that all Aikido groups could join without any threat to their autonomy. This was accepted as a way forward and was approved by the MAC as an integral group, which was what the Sports Council wanted.

Unfortunately, some time later there was a disagreement between the various Karate groups and the Karate Control Board collapsed, and they showed no further interest in the MAC rendering its existence in a poor state, those arts outside of Aikido and Karate had shown little interest in the scheme from the start and soon the MAC itself collapsed!

The British Aikido Control Board members still considered that a formal relationship that protected the autonomy of different Aikido schools should be preserved, but with a simpler title and it was agreed that the name **British Aikido Board** was acceptable to all concerned including the Sports Council, and so it came to pass that the BAB was created.

In the late 1980s the Kai Shin Kai had grown to be about one third of the strength of the BAA and were expressing ambitions to become recognised in their own right, this view was not shared by Mike Smith. However Kai Shin Kai decided to leave the BAA and seek direct affiliation with Aikido Honbu in Japan, Mike and a small group of clubs remained with the BAA, and provide a nucleus for development of Traditional Aikido within the BAA.

From those early days the BAA has always looked ahead striving to bring a variety of good practice into the association. The association has been: -

[Founder member of the Martial Arts Commission \(MAC\)](#)  
[Founder member of British Aikido Board \(BAB\)](#)  
[Founder member of Tomiki Aikido International Network \(TAIN\)](#)  
[Founder member of World Sport Aikido Federation \(WSAF\)](#)

The BAA Executive, under the leadership of the then Chairman Bob Jones, were considering how the BAA was administered and all felt there was need to make some changes, Bob Jones was keen to modernise the Executive so that it better reflected the membership which had three strands of Aikido within it, Tomiki Aikido was, and still is, the largest group, but also there were those members following the teachings of Sensei



Nariyama, under the name Shodokan. It was felt that these members should have direct representation on the Executive, and of course, the Traditional group.

One of the discussions concerned the Presidency of the Association, and it became clear that whichever main group supplied the President the other main group might be unhappy, rather than have any disharmony over this issue the decision was taken to appoint "Fellows" of the Association, on the basis that those persons could provide the same service to the BAA as a President would have done!

The reconstructed Executive committee was formed with each post being held by a person to carry out a specific task rather than just be a representative; a smaller more efficient working group, and this prevails today. The post of Chairman was of course maintained and it is of interest in this history to record the names of those who have held this Office.

In 2014 the Association left the British Aikido Board to pursue its own distinctive path, we now offer associate membership to a variety of groups and styles of Aikido

Internationally the BAA has been a member of the TAIN, which was the unified World Network for Tomiki Aikido. TAIN is soon to be replaced by the JAA led International Tomiki Aikido Federation (ITAF), with the Shodokan organisation the Shodokan Aikido Federation (SAF) already operational.

The British Aikido Association is now founder members of the World Sports Aikido Federation (WSAF) whilst maintaining links with both the JAA and the SAF for technical development. The BAA has always been an open organisation and had a strong commitment to five founding principles, which were reaffirmed by the Executive Committee in 2006.

**Democracy:** That the organization remains democratic and that all key positions are open for election on a three-year rotation. No single individual within the organization has the sole authority over any aspect of development whether administrative or technical. This effectively means there are no Shihan's or President's within the BAA.

**Independence;** That the organization is self-determining and is not restricted to the teachings of any one sensei or style but is broadly driven by the Tomiki system and practices. The BAA is autonomous providing technical and administrative direction within the UK with support for visiting instructors.

**Openness;** The BAA is committed to the Tomiki school of Aikido including the teaching of the Junanahon, Koryu's and the Goshin Ho, Kakarigieko, Hikitategieko and Randori but endeavours to offer a broad church approach in delivery style and application of techniques. This is a deliberate attempt to establish good but varied Aikido. The syllabus directs technical standards by ensuring that the knowledge and substance of Tomiki Aikido is maintained.

**Competition:** The BAA has held competitions since the first National Championships in 1968. The BAA is committed to the promotion of Aikido as a competitive sport. The BAA annually organizes both Junior and Senior Competitions and supports a highly successful British National Team.



**Uniformed processes:** The BAA is committed to a uniform administrative approach with the Constitution; Bye Laws and Working practices applying to all. It has links to Sport England, Sports Coach UK, Japan Aikido Association, Shodokan Aikido Federation and World Sports Aikido Federation.

The British Aikido association continues to grow and develop, now with a range of groups as Affiliate members, who add to the diversity and range of opportunity within the organisation.

### **Key Historic timeline**

- 1966: British Aikido Association founded
- 1968: First National Senior Competition
- 1977: First National Junior Competition
- 1987: Formation of National Team
- 1989: First International Tournament, Tenri, Japan
- 1991: BAA Silver Jubilee Festival & World Championship, Cardiff, Wales
- 1993; International Tournament, Katsuura, Japan
- 1997; International Tournament, Imabari Japan
- 1997; Move from regional representatives to elected EC based on job descriptions
- 1999: Bill Lawrence appointed first Fellow of the British Aikido Association
- 2003; International Tournament, Leeds, England
- 2005; International Tournament, Katsuura, Japan
- 2007; International Tournament, Vandalia, USA
- 2008: Bill Lawrence first BAA 8<sup>th</sup> Dan
- 2009: International Tournament, Kyoto, Japan
- 2010: B C Eustace promoted to 8<sup>th</sup> Dan
- 2011: International Tournament, London, England
- 2012: initial Junior European Competition, Fiesch, Switzerland
- 2012: Association Incorporated as a social enterprise Private Limited Company
- 2012: Bob Forest Webb promoted to 8<sup>th</sup> Dan
- 2013: International Tournament, Kawasaki, Japan
- 2014: BAA leaves the BAB
- 2015; International Tournament, Gold Coast Australia (SAF)
- 2015; International Tournament Fiesch, Switzerland (JAA)
- 2016: BAA Golden Jubilee
- 2015: World Sports Aikido Federation Founded
- 2016: World Sport Aikido Federation Incorporated
- 2017: Lesley Hepden promoted to 8<sup>th</sup> Dan
- 2017: First WSAF World Championships
- 2017: Mike Smith promoted to 8<sup>th</sup> Dan
- 2018: Senior National Championships Golden Jubilee

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