

## **History of the Budokwai, London; the adoption of Kōdōkan judo in the early years**

Mike Callan, University of Chichester, Chichester, United Kingdom

Key words: judo, history, Koizumi, Budokwai, ju-jitsu

### **Abstract**

2018 marks the centenary of the opening of the Budokwai in London. Billed as 'Europe's oldest and most prestigious judo and martial arts club' (Budokwai, 2017). This paper explores the early origins of the Budokwai, and its adoption of Kōdōkan judo.

The Budokwai, opened on Saturday 26 January 1918, occupying two empty shops at 15 Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1 close to Buckingham Palace. Koizumi Gunji had leased the former dressmaker's premises from the landlord's agents on 19 December 2017, and promoted the new society through the Japanese newspaper, Nichi-Ei Shinshi. The society was formed as a martial arts and cultural club for the Japanese in London, and any westerners who showed an interest in Japanese culture.

The first member was Ouchiya Masami, and the society gained 14 members in the first five days, and by the end of February the numbers had swelled to 36 (Budokwai, 1929), paying the membership fee of £3.

During early 1918 London was subject to First World War night-time bombing raids (Johnson, 2017), and in the middle of the practice on 28 January they could hear the air raid and the booming of guns. 1918 also marked a turning point for the efforts of the women's

suffrage movement, when the Representation of the People Act received Royal Assent on 6 February 1918, and women over the age of 30 were given the right to vote (Crawford, 2006).

Koizumi had previously visited the UK in 1906 - 1907, returning from America in 1910, just before the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition in White City. In 1906 Koizumi was briefly engaged as an instructor at the 'Kara Ashikaga School of Jiu-jitsu' in Liverpool, where he met Uyenishi Sadakazu (Raku) and Ohno Akitaro (Daibutsu), who were performing in the music halls (Uyenishi, 1906). Uyenishi introduced him to William Garrud, and he moved to London to teach at the Piccadilly School of Ju-jitsu in Golden Square (Lister, 1965). There Koizumi taught alongside Uyenishi, Ohno Mitsuyo Maeda and Tani Yukio. Ohno and Maeda introduced Koizumi to Kōdōkan judo (Koizumi, 1965).

Initially all the Budokwai early members were Japanese. Tani Yukio is member number 17. The first lady member was Miss Katharine White-Cooper, number 60 who joined in April 1919, shortly before Ernest Harrison, number 64, who joined in May 1919 (Budokwai, 1929).

In the initial months, the Budokwai did not use the term judo. An advertisement in Health and Strength states 'Budokwai (Knighthood Club) for Ju-jitsu' (Budokwai, 1918). Utilising original archival material, the paper shows how the principles of the society changed. In February 1918 they do not mention judo, but included; 'Be earnest in pursuance of Budo, but never boast' (Editor, 1918). The committee meeting of 29 November 1919 approved one of the principles as; 'Never boast or misuse one's skill in JUDO or other arts' (Budokwai, 1931).

Keen to expand the membership, the first Annual Display was held at the Budokwai premises, on 11 May 1918, attracting about 100 visitors, including Consul General Yamazaki (Bowen, 2011). The first mention of the word 'judo' in the *dōjō* diary is found on this date (Budokwai, 1931).

The paper outlines the role of William E. Steers in encouraging the fledgling society to adopt Kōdōkan judo. Steers had met Koizumi at the Golden Square School in 1906 (Wolf, 2010). During a visit to Japan in 1912 he was awarded *shōdan* by the Kōdōkan. He joined the Budokwai on 29 November 1918, and by the end of the year had taken on the role as Honorary Secretary.

On 21 December 1918, Steers gave a lecture at the Budokwai 'A perfect manhood and judo of the Kōdōkan'. The lecture was heavily promoted and was reported in the Sunday Times (Budokwai, 1931).

Ernest Harrison had also studied Ju-jitsu (Tenshin Shinyo-ryu) in 1897 at the Hagiwara Ryoshinsai *dōjō* in Yokohama, before he moved to Tokyo and gained a *shōdan* at the Kōdōkan.

Both Steers and Harrison were strong advocates for Kōdōkan judo (Shortt & Hashimoto, 1979). In May 1919 Harrison wrote a piece for Health and Strength Magazine, entitled 'The Art of Judo' (Harrison, 1919). Thanks to arrangements by Steers, on 15 July 1920 Professor Kanō Jigoro accompanied by 4th-dan Aida Hikochi arrived at Waterloo Station at midnight, and were met by Koizumi and Steers. Kanō was in Europe to attend the Antwerp Olympic Games in his role as a member of the International Olympic Committee (Bowen, 2011). In December 1920 at a *yudanshakai* held at the Budokwai, Kanō awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> *dan* to both Koizumi and Tani (Budokwai, 1931).

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