

Karate Academy

馬年

Newsletter February 2026

The second month of the year means that we are already making progress towards our goals. The lunar new year occurs on 17th February, and the oriental tradition means it will become the Year Of The Fire Horse! Longevity, mystery, and wisdom.

All superstition aside; in the end, the year is what you make of it. It's still early enough to set some big targets. Aim *high* because if you miss you still get somewhere. Then, in the short term, look at the next small step that takes you toward your goal. We must know the macro and then focus on the micro.

As we look ahead to the events that are coming up, we must not take our eye off of the fact that our own, regular, habit-forming, training is what will make these things achievable. Seminars and events are the *special* that the *mundane* supports. We recommend training twice per week. Like washing, you do it whether you need it or not...

John Burke,
Chief Instructor

The Big Event

Once again we are very pleased to host a seminar with Anthony Blades hanshi. It's taking place on March 7th, starting at 10am, and we urge all members to be there. It won't be suitable for Little Warriors who will still have their morning class that Saturday as usual. Since 1999 we have regularly hosted Mr Blades and enjoyed his guidance in the development of our Karate. He is the co-founder of our association and its most senior sensei. The seminar will feature Hanshi's particular blend of body mechanics and efficient Karate. You won't want

to miss this. The seminar is just £10 per person, it is included in the fees for anyone taking a Dan Grade on this occasion.

Following on from the seminar will be the Dan Grading. This is the test that awards successful candidates with Black Belts. While Renshi John is more than qualified to award grades up to 5th Dan black belt, he knows that is wise to have outside validation and feedback, and so Hanshi Blades is invited to provide his knowledge and experience. The Dan Grading should be attended by all the Brown Belts and Black Belts, whether they are grading or not, as this will provide them with valuable feedback. There is no charge outside of the seminar fee. The Grading Candidates have all received their Grading Notices with their charges already laid out. The candidates for the test and any adult members are then welcome to join us for an evening meal with Mr Blades. Oh, the stories he could tell...

Why?

Worth repeating from last year: why train twice per week? Well, the first answer should be because you **want to**. We can tell you that it's good for you. We can tell you that the exercise will help you be strong. We can tell you about toning muscles and weight loss. We can tell you that it's good for socialisation and that the mental health benefits of being in class are going to cascade into the rest of your life. We can point out that the self defence skills taught are increasingly important. We can talk about the historical and philosophical nature of the art and how it's an interesting non-sedentary hobby.

The list goes on and on, but in the end you won't be there unless you want to be there. You need to have a "why" of your own which is big enough to overcome the moments of weakness when it would simply be easier to not come to class. It's easier to stay at home. Easier to watch tv. Easier to play video games or lose yourself in doom-scrolling on social media. It's easier not to train in Karate. But if your why is big enough and means so much to you that it is stronger than the lazy impulse then the *excusitis* will be put away and we can get on with being better.

We all have bad days when the excuses that are available to us seem so much bigger than going to that boring karate class where we're just going to be doing the same thing... again. Overcoming that feeling with the realisation that when we go to class we feel better. When we make that effort we actually feel proud of ourselves for going even when we didn't really want to. And we usually have

a good time even if Sensei John is upset by how few people get his *Life of Brian* references...

For you to be a karate-ka you must do karate. Not on special occasions but *habitually*. Be a regular face in the dojo not a special guest. And every time we get to do those basic techniques better is a wonderful opportunity. To be better.



Diary Dates:

February 2025

- 14th Valentine's Day
- 14th Little Warriors Stripe Test
- 15th Kyu Grading
- 26th no 10am class

Members Resources

Members Only Facebook Group:

We want to share information for and about *members* on the **Keiko Karate** Facebook Group.

The App: if you would like to book your places just set up an account. It's free.

For iPhone users please use this link— <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/karate-academy/id1542741931>

For Android users please use this link— <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.goretrieve.karateacademy>

It should also be available in your favourite app store for free. Just search for **Karate Academy**. Our website:

www.KarateAcademy.co.uk where there are events and timetable updates available.

The *members* site

www.members.KarateAcademy.co.uk where you can access all the syllabus materials for free.

Syllabus DVDs are available from your instructor, as are John Burke renshi's range of books and DVDs on the subject of **kata applications**. You could get them on Amazon, but members receive a discount from their instructor.

If anyone requires equipment (pads etc) please see your instructor as we would hate for you to have the wrong thing.

The Christmas Party

It seems like a long time ago, now, but we must still find the time to say thank you to everyone who contributed towards the buffet at the Christmas Party. Thanks, too, to those who helped with the clean up.

We think everyone had a good time as we deployed our range of festive exercises and ran the group ragged

for a couple of hours. We had our usual array of Piggy Back Sparring, Ninja Ninja Turtle, and Dodge Fist alongside kata on the spot, backwards, and on the floor. Then, of course, it was time for the awards and the buffet.

The Awards

During the December 2025 Christmas Party we made our Awards for the year in recognition of efforts and achievements not necessarily reflected in grades. The recipients were:

Most Improved Student 2025

Edward Saunders

Most Dedicated Student 2025:

Tilly Thomas

Most Helpful Sempai 2025:

Louie Chambers

Student of the Year 2025:

Lokesh Balaji

Well done, all. Now, of course, we are looking at who will be our nominations for those categories in 2026!

Training Diaries

Use your new 2026 Training Diary!

They are given out for free by your instructor. It has pages for all the months of the year, pertinent etiquette reminders and pages for you to make notes for your development and to review in the future. If you present a Training Diary at your lessons then your instructor will stamp it with their *hanko* to show your attendance. We keep our own register of attendance for *our* benefit; your training diary is for *you*! In years to come you'll look back on events that will seem nostalgic, but this is where dojo legends are born...

Careers Day

We have once again been invited to present information about being professional Karate instructors at the

Careers Day organised by Barton Academy in Torquay. Sensei Janet and Renshi John will be on hand to take the students' question on 6th February.

If any members would like us to do presentation at *their* school just let us know. We have taken PE lessons, assemblies, talked to classes about Japanese culture, and presented around after school activities. All we need is to arrange the time to do it.

Birthdays

The following students celebrate their Birthday this month (February)

1st	Nwe Nwe Oo
6th	Hannah Joseph
12th	Leilanni-Rosa Mejias-Evered
17th	Anthony Blades hanshi
18th	Teddy James Chambers

Happy
Birthday
to You



New Members

The Karate Academy is pleased to welcome the following new members who joined during December and January:

Edgar Humphries,
(*Newton Abbot*)

Austin Seabrook,
Ivy Seabrook
(*Newton Abbot Little Warriors*)

Recommendation is the highest compliment we can receive.

Welcome one and all!

Last Word

We need to be proud of our grades. Our belts represent our achievements. That means we have to keep standards high. You don't get a grade because I like you, but because you can do the thing that you say you can do. Actually, the grade isn't the thing at all. It's about improvement. Now, if you set about *improving* then grades will happen anyway. But you do actually have to get better. There is no point in giving someone a grade that says that they can perform at a particular level if they can't perform at that level. Every lesson we have the opportunity to practice what we know and learn something new. We set about doing it better. Faster, stronger, more energetically, more efficiently, neater, tidier, and better. We look at using our whole body in every technique and uniting it with intention and breathing. If a lesson doesn't leave you tired then you might not be working hard enough...

To be clear, because not everyone knows: when the instructors have seen you perform consistently well in the dojo they give you a letter called a Grading Notice. It is your permission to take the test. The test is then scheduled and you must pass the test to be awarded a grade. Everyone is welcome to train on the test day, but not everyone will be grading. Supporting your friends and fellows on grading day is a good show of spirit and good attitude and also gives you insight into what is expected of you. The next Kyu Grading is on Sunday 15th February 2026, beginning at 10am. You can't wish for a grading, you can only do the work and gain the experience that makes taking one a part of your journey. And you can't compare yourself to others whose situation is different to yours.

Proud to be the Keikokai. See you in the dojo.

Oss



**Dedicated to Black Belt
Excellence**