Karate Academy

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Newsletter March 2026

No sooner do we make announcements than things change and we need to rearrange our plans.
And yet, part of what makes us martial artists is how we cope with stresses, threats and opportunities. When we feel like quitting we realise that all the discipline from taking Karate lessons can be a useful tool to help us manage our situation. We forge ahead—sometimes slowly, sometimes progressing in great leaps—but always forwards. Real martial artists are a rare breed. They cannot be found in great numbers as they are not just playing at dressing up but *living* the martial arts life. We support each other and put up with each other's moods as we understand how great what we have is.
So there will be a seminar. It will be great. You will learn things that you have not seen before. You will train with senior martial artists of Keikokai. You might come to see why I sign off the Newsletter the way that I do.

John Burke,
Chief Instructor

The Big Event

Unfortunately Anthony Blades hanshi will not be able to make it this time. He does know that he has an open invitation to come and teach us whenever he wants to or is able. With anxious members ready to take their Black Belt test we are going to go ahead without Hanshi and run our event anyway. Indeed, it just became a celebration of the senior Black Belts in Keikokai as we now have a seminar with FIVE instructors. **Deborah Needham** sensei (sandan), **Janet Drew** sensei (yondan), **Neil Tappenden** sensei (yondan), **Jim Harvey** sensei (godan), and **John Burke** renshi (nanadan) will teach the heart of our art on Saturday 7th March. There is no additional fee to take part. Don't miss out.
The seminar will feature content designed to show essential karate skills at a new level, and it is also part of a test taking place that day. It is suitable for all the teen and adult students regardless of grade, with younger members able to participate on a case by case basis. Little Warriors will have their usual class that morning.
The seminar runs from 10am—12noon.
At 12noon we move over to the technical Dan Grading. All the brown belts and above are expected to stay on from the seminar and participate in the test. This will support the candidates and provide valuable experience for those who are hoping to test at some point in the future.
That evening the candidates and any of the Brown Belts and Black Belts who would like to attend are welcome to join us for a meal at Twelve Twenty in Wolborough Street at 6.30pm. We hope to have much to celebrate.

March Timetable

Most of our classes are on as usual during March. There are, however, a few things to be aware of:
Saturday **March 7th** No Juniors class, no Open class due to the seminar (which you should *all* be at anyway).
Friday **March 20th** No classes
Sunday **March 29th** No Brown and Black Belt class
Monday **March 30th** Little Warriors at 5.30pm instead of 5pm.
Tuesday **March 31st** No evening classes in Newton Abbot, Torquay class is on as usual.
Wednesday **April 1st** Little Warriors at 5.30pm instead of 5pm.
Friday **April 3rd Good Friday** no classes
Saturday **April 4th** normal
Sunday **April 5th** no classes as **Easter Sunday**
Monday **April 6th** no classes as **Easter Monday**
Apart from these there will be classes throughout the Easter Holidays. Grab your training when you can.

New Members

The Karate Academy is pleased to welcome the following new members who joined during February:

Lola Beech, Raven Cleland-Lights,
(Newton Abbot)

Recommendation is the highest compliment we can receive.

Welcome one and all!

Birthdays

The following members celebrate their Birthday this month (March)

21st	Jim Harvey sensei
23rd	Jacob Mperi
24th	Adrian Smith, Tilly Thomas, Nick Hawkes
26th	Emmanuvel Benay
27	Louie Chambers
29	Yovella Green

Happy Birthday to You

Kyu Grading

On Sunday 15th February 2026 there was a coloured belt test at the Newton Abbot dojo overseen by Sensei Deborah, Sensei Janet, and Renshi John with the assistance of Nick Hawkes.
The following grades were awarded to the successful candidates:

2nd kyu
Sora Thomson Tanaka
5th kyu
Ted Kirsop Taylor
6th kyu
Elsie Angell
7th kyu
Lokesh Balaji
8th kyu
Toby Chambers, Jasmine Fry
9th kyu
Jude Arnold

Thanks to everyone who supported the test and congratulations to the graders and their instructors for getting them there.
We are now looking at who is eligible for the next kyu grading. This is entirely dependent on what the instructors see in class. Even if a Grading Notice has been issued previously, if the effort is not there then there is no way the candidate can be included on the next test.
Candidates must show that they know and can *do* the relevant parts of the syllabus. The instructors are watching out for a reason to grade you and to do that they have to see you regularly.

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.

Diary Dates:

March 2026
1st St David's Day
7th Seminar & Dan Grading
15th Mother's Day
17th St Patrick's Day
20th No classes
29th No classes
30th Little Warriors at 5.30pm, Open at 6pm
31st No Newton Abbot evening classes, Torquay on as normal

April 2026
1st Little Warriors at 5.30pm, Open at 6pm
3rd Good Friday no classes
4th Normal
5th Easter Sunday no classes
6th Easter Monday no classes

Last Word

Of course we're sad not to have Hanshi Blades with us this month. It feels like too long since his last visit. We'll encourage him to come and teach us when circumstances allow. As far as the Black Belt test goes, though, it is in no way less valid with the panel that we have put together to conduct the exam than it would be with Hanshi present. External verification aside, anyone tested for Black Belt by a 7th Dan, a 5th Dan, two 4th Dans and 3rd Dan should feel like they have been properly scrutinised. Let's face it, a 3rd Dan can award 1st Dan on their own, so this panel is empowered to create up to 5th Dan. It's all the validation that anyone should need. What about standards? What about people just getting a grade from their instructor that they see every week? Well, that's why there's a panel. To prevent favouritism. To prevent bias. With over 100 years of martial arts experience between them, the panel are well placed to judge the ability and development of the candidates. In fact, if you think about it, I have to live with the decision to pass or fail the candidates and have a huge desire to not be embarrassed by the outcome. Grades are lovely recognition for the individual but are also a badge of honour for the instructor. They say a lot about the dojo. I, as an instructor, have to be certain that those awarded new grades will represent the dojo and ME in a good light. My Black Belts can walk into any dojo and their ability and experience will be understood and respected. I'm reminded of a story where a young person visited an instructor in Okinawa showing off their new black belt, and the old master said that rather than pride in themselves they should congratulate their teacher for getting them there.

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

Dedicated to Black Belt Excellence