

Community

ADVERTISING FEATURE

An A – Z of Fitness: T is for T'ai Chi

T'AI CHI Chuan is a Chinese martial art which has become better known as a practice for bettering one's health.

T'ai Chi, as it is usually known, has a number of different styles named after the families or founders who developed them. The one most seen and practised is the Yang style. It consists of a routine of postures (the form) linked together in a slow, even paced manner often described as a dance.

The movements are accompanied by a rhythm of abdominal breathing and a concentrated use of the vision, which calms the body and clears the mind. It can assist in regulating blood pressure. Other benefits include a strengthening of the leg muscles and an improvement in joint mobility and muscle elasticity.

Some studies have shown an improvement in leg musculature; others an improvement in balance and stability.

The postures used are associated with Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) theory, each posture being said to improve the health of a particular organ or the system associated with it. Overall, the form helps to improve and regulate the flow of Chi or vital energy within the body, according to TCM.

This is truly an activity approachable by all, except perhaps the severely disabled, and even then adapted versions can be created.

However, it can have its challenges:

- learning and remembering the sequence
- space for home practice can be a problem

• honing the learnt form until it embodies the accepted principles

For this reason, classes often incorporate Chi Gung exercises. These are breath or energy work routines which are shorter and usually less complex forms than that of the T'ai Chi (which in itself is one long Chi Gung routine). Without being a 'quick fix', they produce the health benefits more easily, especially those associated with de-stressing.

Some classes will teach the martial aspects, usually on an optional basis.

The activity can be a gateway to meditative activity and a spirituality based on Taoist philosophy, and has an extensive and interesting literary heritage (The Classics) to pursue.

Joint Effort Fitness

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

AS reported in the last issue of *The Beeston Express*, the new 5-year Nature Conservation Strategy for Broxtowe has been launched and is now available for download from the Broxtowe Borough Council website.

It would be worthwhile for local nature lovers to get hold of a copy of this if they can. It gives an overview of wildlife conservation in the borough and gives some details of why particular sites are of value as well as identifying some areas where knowledge is lacking. It serves as a useful guide to wildlife watching in Broxtowe.

The strategy brings together a range of wildlife organisations and interested parties and sets out a number of policies and action plans, which should, if fully implemented, make Broxtowe a better place for wildlife. Although the strategy has no legal

status in planning terms it should be a powerful influence in the planning process. The development planning process has been an important factor in the loss of wildlife habitats in the past. If the strategy does its job, then these losses ought to be much reduced in Broxtowe.

Although the strategy has no specific funding attached, its existence should make it easier to attract grants. The funding for some elements of the plan, such as the ambitious target to plant 100,000 trees in the borough between 2008-2013, appears to be in place. This scheme has a great deal to commend it. The strong element of community involvement in planting means that the trees are more likely to be valued and protected, thus giving them a better chance of growing to maturity. The emphasis on planting appropriate native species from local seed is also

important. Planting from a local genetic pool of established trees increases the chances that a tree will grow successfully and can improve its value to wildlife in the area, in particular for insects.

After the controversy over the felling of trees on Beeston High Road, it might have been expected that their replacements would follow this trend and been local native species, particular in view of the claim that "the Borough Council has been working with Nottinghamshire County Council and the Notts Wildlife Trust to ensure that replacement trees will not only improve the look of the High Road but will also be beneficial to local wildlife."

The replacement trees, planted last week, might be more familiar to some passing students than to local wildlife. The trees that are still in leaf don't appear



**A Beeston Christmas
Community Carol Singing Event**
Featuring a nativity scene for you to
"Get in the Picture"
Saturday 12th December 11.30am-12.00pm
Beeston Square
All Welcome

"Get in the Picture"
Join in the nativity scene, have your picture taken
and download it afterwards from
www.getinthepicture.org.uk
Photo sessions available from 10.30-11.30am & 12-12.30pm

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lovers in Broxtowe can not only learn from it but also enjoy keeping an eye on its progress.

*Jack Smith
Local ecologist*

A council spokesman said: "The trees on the High Road have been chosen for their tolerance to the built environment and their visual quality. There are two types, Sweet Gum (USA) and the Maidenhair Tree (Japan).

"The native species given away are not the most appropriate for planting in a pedestrian street."

Answers to General Knowledge Quiz on page 15:

1. Rio de Janeiro
2. A small island
3. Chicken
4. A goshling
5. Lurch
6. Liz McColligan