

A.I.M.A.A SCOTLAND
1ST degree BLACK BELT THESIS

CELIA GOUGH 1ST KUP

My journey through Tae Kwon Do began in another life! Well this is how it seems to me now. My journey has been spiritual, as well as a physical one, being pushed and challenged continuously. My life then so different, I was so different mentally and physically, Inferior to everyone around me, with no self confidence, and extremely overweight.

I was sitting in church thinking, taking stock of my life, afraid of the future. Having two young children I didn't want them to end up like me! Kirsty was already extremely shy, hiding away from people, being a loner at school. I couldn't cope with that, I know I had to do something for their sake.

We went home after church, then later went to visit their gran who lived in Larkhall, just next to the leisure centre. Somehow on this occasion we drove further along to it and went in. We looked around and found Tae Kwon Do, the class was just about to start. My eldest daughter Kirsty was invited to join in, and with a bit of convincing she did! She loved it! And couldn't wait to go back, which she did on the Wednesday and joined the club with "Master Kirkwood". This was it, the answer to my prayers.

Kirsty loved the training, which seemed to lift both of our spirits. She'd talk about what she had learned and demonstrated it, Kara and I would love a go, it was fun. Then I began to walk Kirsty to school instead of driving, making changes to my life as well. Kirsty's enthusiasm was contagious, gaining confidence and showing discipline. I was gaining in this as well, not using food as comfort in my life.

Then Kirsty was given a newsletter announcing a new ladies class starting which sounded great! During Kirsty's class, Isobel spoke with me and gave advice and courage to say yes to join the ladies class! It was great, I loved it. I started to go to the gym while Kirsty trained and then I'd do my class. We continued our training and a few months later I was asked to join the main class by this time I wouldn't give it up, so I joined. Both of us trained in Larkhall and Blantyre clubs, then doing squad training as well, which was great for the fitness which helped me, lose weight.

I loved it! Kara at this stage had just joined as well. It was amazing being trained by Master Kirkwood with such dedication, whole hearted dedication. Training within the main class was so different and tougher, again being challenged in so many ways. Still this time learning and growing, grading time came and with it a whole new experience, a test of nerve, being pushed made me stronger.

The grading's gave me motivation, I set goals, some personal to, teaching me things like never wanting to give up, growing in the inside, my mind and spirit. To become physically fitter, more healthier and stronger.

Our home had a harmony now, we shared chores, being responsible for homework, which are always done thanks to Tae Kwon Do, for its discipline and dedication.

I started competing at yellow belt wanting to experience and learn as much as I could. I found I loved the fight; it was something that was in my heart. Tae Kwon Do gave me a force within, my spirit. Competing is a way for me to try and gain something back, to show respect, being so grateful of what has been so skillfully taught and generously passed on by Master Kirkwood.

Never thinking that someone like me would even think about perfection, but Tae Kwon Do has given me that, understanding of self perfection.

My journey brought us to A.I.M.A.A Ireland, and then I had the honor and privilege to meet Master Darcy and later Master Byrne. Being invited to train with Master Darcy was amazing. I remember being anxious, training was just about to begin, the atmosphere building-along with my nerves. I didn't know quite what to do, so I moved over to the punching bags, began punching. Master Darcy came over and began helping and showing me combinations, teaching me, I couldn't believe it, right before class starting, taking time to help me!

A.I.M.A.A Ireland is another part of family now, and now seems a home from home!

At summer camp this year, having the great privilege to train with and meet "Grandmaster Hee Il Cho". To see him was so unreal, listening to him speak was quite over whelming for me! Standing on the same ground I felt humbled and greatly thankful. I found my composure on the second day, stood in line and proudly waited to bow and to shake Grandmasters hand; it was indeed a true honor.

On the third day we had training under Grandmaster Hee Il Cho, it was truly awesome as he had such superiority, such wisdom, knowledge, ability with remarkable explosive power and passion! A lifetime of dedication, of commitment, he is a true master, a living legend.

I also got to meet and train with Master Ameris, I loved Master Ameris's boxing class, learning techniques and combinations, using the padded walls as out punch bags, and it was great! Master Ameris has amazing power and speed, watching him work with the knife, with true skill, total expertise.

Master Darcy with realism of patterns shown with such power, helping the students break down each movement from the start. Master Byrne with his one-step which was amazing a "Blink of the eye" and I'd missed it. Speed and power beyond belief! Master Kirkwood began with an electrifying points sparring class using unique dynamic explosive techniques with utmost controlled precision.

I loved the fitness, stamina classes with Mr Power and Mr Healy, totally amazing! Being pushed to the limits, using every bit of energy, made me feel like I was doing squad training back home. Training every day with different Masters and Instructors was a dream come true. The atmosphere was amazing. The whole experience of summer camp was amazing for me, my perfect holiday, days of just training. I have so much to learn and so much I want to make better!

My future now that I feel that I have one is being a fitter, healthier more balanced person, quite my approach from my beginning, and being there for my children's future.

All this is due to Master Kirkwood, an unassuming man with integrity, and always so professional, respectful, who motivates through total dedication. I can only hope that I am given the chance to return such loyalty, disciple and dedication to my training and to A.I.M.A.A Scotland, and the A.I.M.A.A Masters.