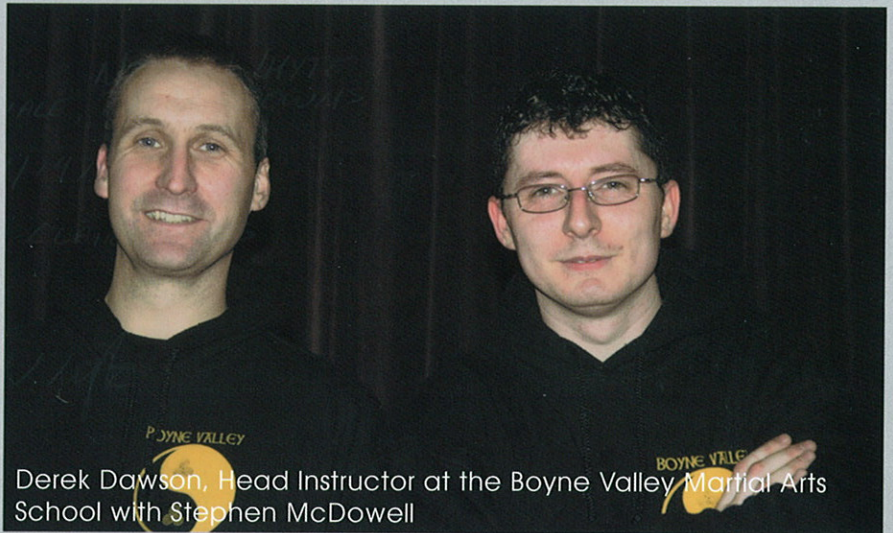


# Another Side Of ...

## Stephen McDowell

Mention Kung Fu and/or Kick Boxing and most people immediately think of action-packed fighting scenes and violence.

However, Stephen McDowell of Calpeda (Ireland) says it is nothing of the sort. Stephen has been practicing the gentle art of Kung Fu for a number of years now and, while he acknowledges its attacking elements, he emphasises that the core discipline is more about controlled aggression with a view to self-defence. Stephen has concentrated on the Kung Fu to date but is now preparing to take the Kick Boxing more seriously and enter competitions.



Derek Dawson, Head Instructor at the Boyne Valley Martial Arts School with Stephen McDowell

Stephen trains at least three times a week — for two hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays and for three hours on Sundays. The training is designed to strengthen and develop what is known as the "three treasures" — the mind (shen); body (jing); and spirit (chi) of the practitioner through vigorous training, forms practice and Chi Kung.

For example, a person whose jing is full is physically fit and healthy; one whose chi is plentiful is emotionally stable and full of vitality; and one whose shen is abundant is mentally fresh and spiritually mature. Hence, says Stephen, Kung Fu for him is more about lifestyle and his whole way of living and working.

Stephen is a member of the Boyne Valley Martial Arts School whose Head Instructor is Derek Dawson and the style of Kung Fu practiced is the system known as Lau Gar Kuen. Derek holds a 2nd Degree Black Sash in Lau Gar Kung Fu and also holds a 1st Degree Black belt in Kick Boxing. Both the traditional (Kung Fu) and sporting (Kick Boxing) aspects of the Lau Gar system are taught at the club.

Practical, effective self-defence techniques drawn from both these aspects of training are also taught. Weapons training is undertaken by advanced students (yellow sash and above). Stephen was at the yellow sash stage as we went to press but was just about to undergo

testing for his Purple sash (which he was quite confident of achieving). True to the whole ethos of Kung Fu, Stephen is now also acting as an assistant to Derek during his teaching sessions with younger members of the club.

A typical training session starts with a gentle warm up followed by cardio-vascular training for fitness and stamina. This is followed by stretching for flexibility and the remainder of the class is spent training in traditional Lau Gar Kung Fu, Kick Boxing and self-defence techniques. Some form of sparring is normally done at the end of a class as it is a useful training tool for the development of speed, timing, power, control and stamina.

Just to complete the biopic, Stephen hails originally from Newry, Co Down, and came down to Dunshaughlin in 2002 to take up an appointment with Graham Fay at Calpeda (Ireland) Ltd. He has been an integral part of the company's rapid growth over the last six years and attributes his ability to contribute so effectively to his involvement in Kung Fu. Not surprisingly, he advises that everyone should at least take a look at Kung Fu, not just for the physical activity but also for the mental and spiritual side. What better place to start than by logging on to [www.boynevalleymartialarts.com](http://www.boynevalleymartialarts.com).