

History of  
Mt Albert Taekwon-Do  
1988 – 2001

Francis Fong

1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt  
March 2001

Mt Albert Taekwon-Do started over 12 years ago, making it a well-established Taekwon-Do club in Auckland. Many changes have occurred through the years including changes in instructors and fluctuating club members.

The club opened on Monday 15 August 1988 with the class being held in the old gymnasium of Mt Albert Grammar School. Mr Graeme “Rocky” Rounthwaite initially assisted in opening the club. At the time he was a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree black belt at the time, head instructor of the Clover Park club (currently known as Clover Branch), and also chairman of Standards and Discipline for the Master Yun International Taekwon-Do Federation (MYITF). Mt Albert club is part of the International Taekwon-Do Foundation, New Zealand (ITFNZ) Incorporated, which was the New Zealand component of MYITF. Mr Jae Young Lee, the club’s head instructor held a 1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt in Taekwon-Do and 6th degree in Hap Ki Do.

The first club intake saw approximately 40 new students join Mt Albert club, including two red belts from the Pakuranga club, Mr Ian Elston and Mr Vince Pygott. Training days were held on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6pm to 7.30pm, with seniors training for a further hour afterwards.

The first Mt Albert club grading was held at Bairds Road Intermediate School in Papatoetoe on Friday 4 November 1988. Master Young Ku Yun, president of MYITF was the examiner. All Mt Albert students passed this grading.

During February of 1989, Mr Lee left Mt Albert Taekwon-Do to move to Wellington and handed the club over to Mr Rounthwaite. In August, Mr Elston and Mr Pygott became the first Mt Albert members to achieve black belts. The club has since produced nine more 1<sup>st</sup> degree black belts (see Appendix 1). In October of the same year, due to conflicting interests, four members of the ITFNZ executive hierarchy were suspended from MYITF. In protest, after a number of discussions, many instructors left Master Yun’s organisation and took their clubs with them. Mt Albert Taekwon-Do continued to be part of the new independent ITFNZ. In December, the club was given a new head instructor, Mr Mark Rounthwaite, 2<sup>nd</sup> degree black belt and son of Mr Rocky Rounthwaite.

The three most senior Mt Albert members (Mr Mark Rounthwaite, Mr Elston and Mr Pygott) took part in the opening ceremony of the 1990 Commonwealth Games. The club advertised itself to the public in February of this year with assistance from other Taekwon-Do clubs. During this year, Mr Rounthwaite travelled

New Zealand with the National Demonstration Team and then to Colorado, USA for a training camp. He brought back a new concept called “Sine Wave” which was later added to the training syllabus. This drastically altered techniques and allowed New Zealand practitioners of Taekwon-Do to adopt the same techniques as other International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) students across the world.

The following three years was a quiet time for the club. February 1991 saw the handing over of the club to Ms Viv Holmes, a 1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt and Treasurer of ITFNZ. In April 1992, Mr Mike Petrie became the first founding member of Mt Albert club to reach black belt level. The year also saw the adoption of the first club badge (see Appendix 2a), worn on the left sleeve of all club members’ *doboks*. In October, Mt Albert club teamed up with the Meadowbank club to form the MAMBO team to challenge Papakura club for the Interclub Trophy. The tournament was a loss for MAMBO, however valuable experience was gained. Towards the end of 1993, Mr Ian Elston (now a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree black belt) resigned his position as Assistant Instructor, leaving no replacement.

The club was handed over to Mr Andrew Niven on 13 June 1994, a 1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt who had started his Taekwon-Do training at Mt Albert under Mr Mark Rounthwaite. Mr Francis Fong, the only remaining black belt and founding member, was given the title of Assistant Instructor. A new club badge was designed and implemented towards the end of this year (see Appendix 2b). Over the next two years, the number of tournament successes increased and a sense of camaraderie showed in all Mt Albert members.

It was a busy year for Mt Albert Taekwon-Do (MATKD as it is now known) in 1995. In March, Mr Niven was given the responsibility of organising and selecting the first Auckland Demonstration Team. Three Mt Albert members - Mr Niven, Mr Francis Fong and Mr Trevor Fong – helped to found this group. In May, Mr Niven was selected as the regional coach to train the Auckland Regional Team for the National Tournament in Wellington. The year also saw MATKD collaborate with the Pakuranga branch to challenge the Papakura club for the Interclub Trophy. The allied clubs won but Pakuranga branch lost the trophy back to Papakura the following year. Later in the year, Mr Garth Cowley of MATKD and Mr Mike Stanford of the Auckland City club organised the bi-annual *Jungshin* Cup tournament between Mt Albert, Auckland City and Hibiscus Coast clubs. These tournaments ran through to 1997 with Mt Albert winning four out of five tournaments.

The period 1996 through to 1998 was a trying time for MATKD as club morale plummeted. During 1996, Mr Niven had opened five other clubs in the Auckland Region and together with MATKD amalgamated under the banner of Nibun Taekwon-Do. This busy schedule left Mr Niven with little time to divide between clubs and some Mt Albert students (including seniors up to red belt level) saw this as a lack of commitment to the club. A few started training at other clubs, but unfortunately, most stopped training altogether. Attendance of club members decreased in size from a regular turnout of approximately thirty students to a loyal core of about twelve. More turmoil came when Mr Mark Rounthwaite attempted to open a branch of BaiRui Taekwon-Do (an Australian organisation) in New Zealand. Serious considerations were given for all Nibun Taekwon-Do clubs to transfer to BaiRui Taekwon-Do. Mt Albert club independently rejected this notion after many lengthy discussions. Ultimately, this decision was supported by Mr Niven. Success still continued throughout this period. Nibun Taekwon-Do won back the Interclub Trophy from Papakura in 1996. Around the same time, an effort was made to boost club morale and a sense of team spirit. Mr Francis Fong organised the first of many Mt Albert Taekwon-Do paintball games. These games are now a regular occurrence and also involve members of other clubs, especially from other Nibun ITF branches.

MATKD celebrated its tenth anniversary on 15 August 1998 with a club dinner held at a Korean Restaurant run by Mr Jae Young Lee. By this time, the club's size was starting to build to its previous strength before its decline two years earlier.

By mid 1999, Mt Albert club was back up to strength. Mr Niven was again given the opportunity to lead a regional team to the National Tournament in Palmerston North as well as coach the 2000 Auckland North team.

In July 2000 the club moved to its present location at Wesley Intermediate School.

Mr Niven continues to teach at MATKD. With almost seven years experience he is currently the longest running head instructor in the history of the club. Despite all the changes and political events of the club over the past twelve years MATKD continues to flourish.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Black Belts Produced By Mt Albert Taekwon-Do**

1989	Ian Elston
1989	Vince Pygott
1990	Shirley Pygott
1992	Aaron DeLacey
1992	Mike Petrie
1993	Darryn Edwards
1993	Francis Fong
1995	Trevor Fong
1996	Rebecca Breen
1998	Paul Jackson
1999	Duncan Head

## APPENDIX 2

### Mt Albert Taekwon-Do Club Badges

#### a) 1992 to 1994



The lion represents Mt Albert Grammar School. In the background is Alberton House, an historic building in the area. The five windows of the House symbolise the five tenets of Taekwon-Do. The senior belt colours of blue, red and black are present and the gold border represents virtue.

#### b) 1994 to 2001



The lion, now in grey, represents Mt Albert Grammar School. The ITF logo in the background refers to the club's parent organisation. The red Chinese characters on the sides are Tae and Kwon.

c) A draft of the new badge for 2001



The lion's claw represents the club's past at Mt Albert Grammar School and symbolises the continuation of MATKD and its traditions. The background is in the Auckland North regional colours and the red Han-Gul characters read Nibun.