

## Early ju-jitsu in New Zealand

Ju-jitsu is likely to have reached New Zealand in the form of books, movies and visiting exhibitionists. The first recorded display of ju-jitsu was at **J M W Harrison's** Gymnasium and School of Physical Culture in Wellington on 2 November 1904. Other early Wellington gymnasiums offering ju-jitsu were Garlick's School of Physical Culture, where **Parker** and **Talbot** taught from 1906, and the Belvedere Club, which **Clarence Stevens** taught at from 1908.

The earliest Japanese visitors were **Ryugoro Shima** of the New South Wales Jiu Jitsu Club, and **Kiyo Kameda**, who gave exhibitions and took on all-comers throughout New Zealand from 1912 to 1914. One of Shima's early opponents was Wellington strongman and wrestler, Herman Henry Ratter, known as **Harry Sandow**. The two faced off in Sydney in 1909 and the match ended 18 minutes later when Shima threw the bigger man and choked him to submission. Harry was the New Zealand runner-up heavyweight boxing champion in 1907. He opened his own club in Hopper Street in 1911, teaching boxing, wrestling, ju-jitsu and physical culture, before moving to Ghuznee Street in 1922.

Another early exhibitionist was **Captain Leopold McLaglen**. Leo was born in London in 1884 and began ju-jitsu studies in 1896. His teacher was a Japanese man who had accompanied Leo's uncle - an officer attached to the British legation in Tokyo - to London, and the ju-jitsu was more like aiki-jujutsu than the judo-style ju-jitsu later taught in Britain. After serving in the South African War, Leo became a professional ju-jitsu promoter, giving demonstrations and teaching the military and police in India, South Africa, Burma, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore.

**Capt. Leopold McLaglen**



In 1907 he beat Professor Kanada under dubious circumstances to become the 'World jiu jitsu champion' and he also claimed victories over other prominent boxers, wrestlers and Japanese ju-jitsu masters.

A great showman, Leo toured the theatres with his highly staged demonstrations of ju-jitsu and shows of strength, but when a challenge from a member of the audience in South Africa ended in public humiliation in 1913, Leo went into hiding 'downunder', teaching in Australia and New Zealand. He returned during the 1920s and taught a three-grade system in schools in Auckland, Nelson and South Canterbury. Leo authored many books, including *Jiu-jitsu - A manual of the science* (1918), *Jiu-jitsu for girls* (1922), *Police jiu-jitsu* (1922), *Katsu - the Leopold McLaglen system of resuscitation* (1934), *Leopold McLaglen's modernised jiu jitsu lessons* (1939), and *Unarmed attack and defence for commando, home guards and civilians* (1942).



**Gardiner and Le Mar**

The husband and wife team of **Joseph Gardiner** and Florence '**Flossie Le Mar**' Warren made an impact on the Vaudeville circuit from 1911 to 1916. Joe was a former English light-heavyweight wrestling champion who taught ju-jitsu to New Zealand-born Flossie, and the two choreographed a multitude of performances that culminated in Flossie defeating the villain. Flossie also taught women's and children's ju-jitsu classes and, in the mid 1930s, taught ju-jitsu to police recruits at Trentham. Together the couple released the book, *The Life and Adventures of Miss Florence Le Mar, the World's Famous Ju-Jitsu Girl* in 1913.

Flossie is thought to be the first woman ju-jitsu instructor in New Zealand.

Another early club to teach ju-jitsu in New Zealand was Mr Taylor's Central School Gymnasium in New Plymouth, where **Professor J J Stagpoole** taught boxing, wrestling and ju-jitsu from 1909. The Wellington YMCA offered ju-jitsu from 1912 until about 1940, first under the tutelage of **P H Heward** and, later, **Maurice Tracey** and his famous boxing brother, **Tim Tracey**. One or both of the brothers appear to have trained under England's ju-jitsu pioneer, Yukio Tani, and Tare Miyake, and there was a healthy rivalry between the Willis Street YMCA and Harry Sandow's gym. **Garnet Sims** Marley was another to teach in Wellington, offering ju-jitsu lessons from 1913 and pairing up with Leo McLaglen during the latter's first visit to New Zealand, and **Fritz Holland** opened in Willis Street in 1921.

Christchurch's first record of ju-jitsu was Hornibrook's Physical Culture Institute on Cathedral Square, where **C M Brown** taught catch-as-catch-can, Graeco-Roman and Cumberland wrestling, along with ju-jitsu from 1909. Kiyoo Kameda settled in Christchurch in 1913, and Hornibrook's hosted Leo McLaglen in 1915. Dunedin's first record was **Tommy Walker's** Moray Place Gymnasium, which taught wrestling and ju-jitsu from 1921. There was even a Ju-Jitsu Correspondence School available from Auckland. Advertised in 1924-1925, it is likely to have been Leo McLaglen's on his second stint in New Zealand.



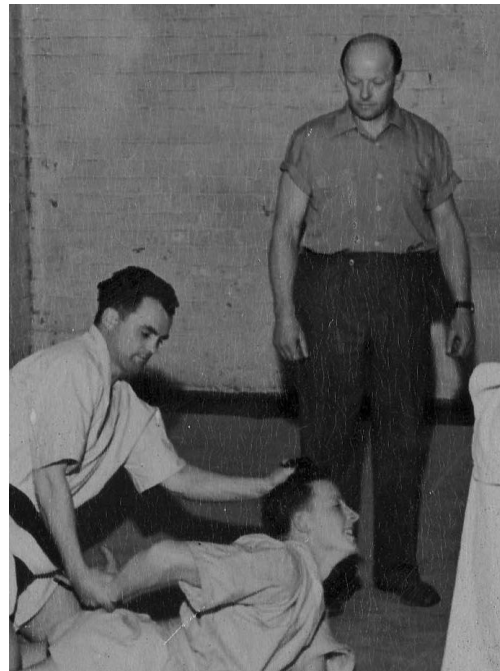
**Garnet Sims**



**John 'Pop' Adams**

An early ju-jitsu exponent to have a lasting impact in Auckland was John **'Pop' Adams**. Pop was working as a lifeguard on Sydney's Bondi Beach in the early 1900s when he saved a Japanese man caught in the surf. The man turned out to be an exponent of ju-jitsu and, in gratitude, he began to teach Pop the techniques of his art. Tradition states that Pop's studies led him to Japan, where he learnt, amongst others, from Prince Osago, and that he studied ju-jitsu in other countries during his travels. On his return to New Zealand, Pop set up a club in Titirangi, Auckland, and later in Central Auckland, where he taught until his retirement in 1947. Students of note were Vic Deverick (club at Western Springs), Bob Phillips (taught at the Auckland YMCA Judo and Jiu Jitsu Club), and Bruce Wilson. Pop's style was noted for its palming techniques.

**Harry Baldock** was an English immigrant who learnt wrestling at Jack Clarke's Christchurch gym in the 1920s. He shifted to Dunedin in 1929 and set up the Baldock Institute of Physical Culture in 1931, teaching bodybuilding and wrestling. His background saw him instructing physical fitness in the Army during the Second World War, which led to a knowledge in unarmed combat and ju-jitsu that was incorporated into the Baldock Institute. Harry retired in 1986 and handed the Institute to Geoff 'Tank' Todd. Harry's teaching remains in Tank's School of Self Defence.



**Harry Baldock**

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Other early recorded practitioners of ju-jitsu are **Dave Rowe** in Whakatane, **Harry Johnson** in Tauranga, and **Reitaro Fukushima** in Christchurch.

## Modern beginnings

With a few exceptions, early ju-jitsu in New Zealand was characterised by short courses in ju-jitsu or ju-jitsu ‘tricks’ appended to established wrestling and boxing. The modern era of ju-jitsu, by contrast, brought complete systems of ju-jitsu to these shores. The pioneers had undertaken prolonged study of Japanese-style ju-jitsu and, as a result, their ju-jitsu showed greater depth. *Dojo* etiquette reflected that of Japan, and organisations used the judo *dan-i* structure of *kyu* and *dan* grades to recognise levels of progression.



**Hans Van Ess**

One of the greatest influences on New Zealand ju-jitsu was **Hans Van Ess**, who arrived in Auckland from Holland in 1961. Hans learnt judo as a child and hand-to-hand combat in the army, but on his discharge from the army, he enrolled at the Centraal Instituut Opleiding Sportleiders at Overveen. There, he studied judo, ju-jitsu, boxing and fencing as part of his physical education qualification. His judo and ju-jitsu studies were at the hands of Jaap Nauwelaerts d'Agé (posthumous 10<sup>th</sup> dan), a student of Jean de Herdt, who was one of Kawaishi Mikonosuke's original French students.

Hans also trained under Gé Koning (9<sup>th</sup> dan) and Anton Geesink (10<sup>th</sup> dan), and attained shodan in both judo and ju-jitsu in 1958. In New Zealand, Hans founded the NZ Judo College in Central Auckland in 1962 and helped to set up the NZ Jiu Jitsu Association in 1968. He retired in 1996 as a 7<sup>th</sup> dan.

Many of Hans' students help spread ju-jitsu throughout the North Island: Laurie Olliver was graded to shodan in 1966, and formed the South Pacific Jiu Jitsu Society in 1970, an organisation that forged ties with Australia and Britain. When Laurie retired in the late

seventies, a 7<sup>th</sup> dan, the SPJJS was continued in Auckland by Jack Bailey, who had been graded to shodan by Hans in 1968. Gary Trail attained shodan in 1971 and took a leading role in the NZJJA until 1997 when he formed the Southern Cross Jiu Jitsu Society in Northland. Steve Heremaia trained originally in the SPJJS but also in NZJJA, obtaining shodan from the latter in 1977. He formed the Rongo School of Jiu Jitsu, followed by the Black Dragon Jiu Jitsu Academy, which had clubs in North Auckland, Auckland, Waikato, Taranaki, Rangitikei, Manawatu and Hawke's Bay. Steve also forged many international ties, notably with American, Wally Jay. David Butler was graded in 1978 and went on to study in Australia under Gordon Griffiths. He then set up Bushido Ju-Jitsu Kai in Auckland in 1979, Aiki-Bu-Jitsu in 1988, based out of Christchurch, and Samurai Arts in Rotorua. Dave trained in ju-jitsu throughout the world, particularly under Obata Toshishiro, and with Ju-Jitsu International.

Another Kawaishi pioneer was **Henk Fekkes**, who also learnt judo and ju-jitsu at the Centraal Instituut Opleiding Sportleiders in Holland. Henk attained shodan in judo and ju-jitsu under Jaap Nauwelaerts d'Agé in 1955 and, after running a club in Leeuwarden, left for Christchurch in 1959. There, Henk taught judo and ju-jitsu at the Crichton Cobbers Club and, from 1962, at the Christchurch YMCA. He retired in 2005, a 3<sup>rd</sup> dan. One of Henk's notable students was Frank Best, who became an Australian Open judo gold medalist, and another was James Salter, who went on to set up clubs in Christchurch, Nelson, Auckland and New Plymouth under his Sakura Kan banner.

Not long after Henk's arrival **John Boniface** moved to Christchurch from Timaru. John trained at the International Judo Club under Frank Best, but later left for Japan where he studied martial arts at Kokushikan University. He returned to Christchurch in 1976, bringing the Fuji Ryu style of ju-jitsu, aikido, kendo and kempo, and Goju-ryu karate with him but retaining close ties with his instructor, Sugawara Gesshu (10<sup>th</sup> dan), and the Japanese headquarters. John died in 1992 but left a strong legacy in the names of Stan Taylor, Paul Reti, James Salter (Sakura Kan), Paul Stokes (Furui Ryu), Julian Columbus, Jim Colenso, and Ren Sadlier.



**Paul Reti, Henk Fekkes, Frank Best,  
Kevin Taylor**



**Front: Stan Taylor, John Boniface,  
Paul Reti**

### **Sport ju-jitsu**

Organised ju-jitsu competitions in New Zealand began in Auckland in 1969 under Laurie Olliver. Initially NZJJA events, Laurie carried them on with the SPJJS, although matches between the two organisations were scrappy and poorly refereed. The format was very judo-oriented although strikes were allowed. Following Laurie contacting the Australian Society of Ju-Jitsuans in the early seventies SPJJS teams traveled to Len Noyes' club in Sydney for tournaments or hosted tournaments in Auckland. These tournaments continued into the nineties.

Meanwhile, correspondence with overseas dignitaries by Steve Heremaia led to an invitation to attend the first World Council of Ju-Jitsu Organisations World Games in Canada in 1984. Steve took a small contingent of his BDJJA students to the Games and was made the WCJJO NZ director. The WCJJO rules were quite different to the SPJJS-ASJJ rules, being mainly striking with some throws and no groundfighting. BDJJA members continued to represent New Zealand at WCJJO World Games throughout the eighties and nineties, with Steve hosting the 1995 World Games at Auckland. At these Games dissatisfaction with the rules by a USA faction resulted in the formation of the International Sport Ju-jitsu Association in 1996. That year Terry Evans took a team to the ISJA World Games in USA and he followed with another to Canada in 1998, where he won a gold medal in grappling.

By the late nineties, a number of sporting versions of ju-jitsu were being staged. Steve Heremaia had an annual national championship for BDJJA members under WCJJO rules, Terry Evans and Gary Polwart held open ISJA tournaments, Doug Bailey was hosting open Jiu Jitsu Unlimited tournaments, and NZJJA had their own 5-point system of competition. In 1999 Doug Bailey contacted Gary Polwart with the idea of combining the various formats onto a single, ranked national circuit of tournaments, and the two formed the **International Sport Ju-Jitsu Association (NZ)**. Within three years over fifty martial arts clubs had competed on the circuit, and the circuit was supported by a Referees' Programme designed to train referees, a sport ju-jitsu black belt system to recognise consistent achievement, and an Elite Athletes' Programme to prepare top competitors for international representation. The ranking system meant that the New Zealand team that attended the 2000 ISJA World Games in England was the first true New Zealand team selected on merit. That team returned with two gold medals, four silver and one bronze.

Throughout the 2000s BDJJA teams continued to attend WCJJO events, and **Sport Ju-Jitsu (NZ)** - as ISJJA(NZ) had been renamed - teams attended ISJA Games. In 2007 Doug Bailey took a small SJJ(NZ) team to the WCJJO World Games and had that organisation, like ISJA, recognise the New Zealand Ju-Jitsu Federation as the governing body for ju-jitsu in New Zealand.

### **New Zealand Ju-Jitsu Federation**

The success of SJJ(NZ) was such that in 2003 Simon Ogden approached Doug Bailey and Gary Polwart with the idea of setting up a national body to control all ju-jitsu. At a meeting on 24 August 2003, representatives of twelve clubs founded the **New Zealand Ju-Jitsu Federation** and within six months the NZJJF had the support of 23 clubs. NZJJF became the parent organisation for Sport Ju-Jitsu NZ, which controlled sporting formats of ju-jitsu, and Ju-Jitsu NZ, which controlled recreational ju-jitsu. Dedicated to unifying and promoting ju-jitsu, NZJJF was careful to make sure it could not constitutionally influence organisations' syllabi or gradings. It became an incorporated society in March 2005, and was recognised by Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC - now Sport NZ) as the National Sport Organisation for ju-jitsu in 2006.



One aim of NZJJF was to raise the standard of ju-jitsu instruction in New Zealand and in 2004 it introduced the Instructors Coaching Programme. In 2012 the programme was restructured to recognise three levels of coaching, with NZJJF providing ju-jitsu specific coaching education. That same year the Public Register of Ju-Jitsu Instructors and Black Belts was launched to provide the public with confidence that registered instructors were practicing safe and effective coaching methods, and registered black belts held the grades they claimed they did.

Today, there is a confidence about NZJJF. It can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the NSOs of other codes, and it has a unity and structure that is the envy of many other overseas ju-jitsu bodies and martial arts organisations. It recognises New Zealand's rich diversity of ju-jitsu styles and celebrates the ju-jitsu leaders who have helped shape the New Zealand ju-jitsu community we know today.