

NEWSLETTER

No. 9

ニュースレター

July 2006

Geisha in Yorkshire



In the midst of what must be one of the wettest droughts on record, the sun did shine on the Festival of Japan, held in Swinton Park, Masham. Swinton Park provided a picturesque setting for a wide range of exhibits and demonstrations, giving the many visitors a rare taste of Japanese culture. Participants included Society Member Marilyn Ratcliffe's Japanese Tex-Style and the Japanese Garden Society.

Authentic okonomiyaki and sushi were available outside in a marquee. Sharing the marquee was Kimie Markarian, a very patient soroban instructor, who enthusiastically showed groups of school children how to do arithmetic using the Japanese abacus.

The highlight of this event was the appearance of a real geisha and maiko. They mingled with the delighted visitors, and even joined them for a lunch of okonomiyaki.

It was quite a long drive getting there, but well worth it!



AGM Report

This year's AGM was hosted by Paul Cantell and Alice Hynes at their house in Crosby. The afternoon was spent in their garden, as the weather was so good.

Attendance was well up on last year, and the mood was very up-beat. After hearing the Officers' reports, the meeting approved the new Constitution and elected a Committee. Immediately following the AGM the Committee met to appoint its Officers.



Your New Committee

Robert Bierman*, John Croall, Louise Croall (Membership Secretary), Angela Davies (Vice Chairman), Steve Fensom, Kevin Howes (Chairman), Alice Hynes (Secretary), Cathy Peel, David Willis (Treasurer) and David Woolf*.

*co-opted members



Committee Member Profile

Cathy Peel

Hello, I'm Cathy Peel.

My first awareness of Japan started when I was 4 years old. I was given a beautiful Japanese doll, dressed in a kimono, and she is now over 50! So it was probably inevitable that in the mid 1960s on completion of a year of voluntary service in India, working alongside a Japanese nurse, I accepted the offer of a further year of voluntary service in Japan.

My experiences included working alongside Japanese workers in a children's home in Hiroshima city; a Pioneer dairy farm in the mountains of Yamanashi prefecture and then later an institution for mentally and physically handicapped



young people in Tokyo. All were wonderful and varied experiences, but after a good number of years back in the UK I missed contact with Japan. This caused me to train and work for the last 18 years as a 'Blue Badge' Tour Guide, mostly in Chester guiding groups of Japanese tourists. I have occasionally given talks about life in Japan, and helped with Japan related projects in local schools.

In recent years I have been fortunate to have been able to revisit Japan a number of times both for recreation and work.

I joined the UK Japan Society of the North West when it was first set up, and am happy to be involved with the current Society, JSNW. It's good to be with people who share a similar interest and be able to widen my knowledge and experience of Japan in doing so.

Review of April Events

The display of Hiroshige's Tokaido Road Prints had been set up in the Exhibition Room. The pictures were framed, glassed and hung on the walls, unlike the occasion when JSNW had been invited to the Blackburn Museum, when we were able to view the collection of prints in their 'original' state. In the centre of the room there was a display of Japanese tea room and in viewing cases there were a number of items of interest, including netsuke, which added interest and authenticity to the pictures, as many of these are of the refreshment stations along the Tokaido Route. This was basically the same route as the Shinkansen of today, but the stations and style of refreshments not quite so canned or open to the elements!

For both the preview evening and the Lecture JSNW had been given the use of a table in the main entrance hall, where we had some promotional material on display, which was helpful and quite a good number of leaflets were taken, and people could talk about the Society.

Preview Evening

This was the evening for invited guests which included a number of JSNW members but was largely for institutions

and other interested parties who have an interest in the Arts and the Grosvenor Museum.

Proceedings commenced in Chester's Grosvenor Museum Lecture Theatre with a welcome and introduction to the exhibition given by the Sheriff of Chester, followed by a short talk from Adrian Sumner thanking the Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery for the loan of their prints, and also the Japan Shop in Chester for artifacts to support the exhibition, and the provision of refreshments.

JSNW was kindly given a slot to talk about the Society and then there was time to admire the prints in the adjacent exhibition room, and take refreshments of sushi and green tea, which was in the Roman Gallery where the attendees mingled, and talked.

'The Peacock Fan Revisited'

This lecture given by Adrian Sumner, Arts and Development Officer for Chester, was a well illustrated and lively talk showing the impact on European Art of the early ukiyoe pictures, showing many cases where influence could be seen directly on the work of Western artists, which was particularly notable in the pictures of the Impressionists. The lecture ended with bringing that influence right up to present day showing modern art and artifacts.

Pictures from the Tokaido Road Preview Evening



Samurai and Swords

SATURDAY 15 JULY

An introduction to the landmark participants and events in the development of Samurai power in the 16th and 17th centuries, illustrated with actual arms and armour of the time and a slide show of significant objects representing the period.

The objects and slides will be explained by Steve Smith, Secretary of the Northern To-Ken Society, member of the International Netsuke Society and former volunteer curator of the Japanese Collections in Liverpool Museum. Members may recall that Steve made an excellent presentation for us a year ago on Netsuke so this talk is sure to be something to appreciate.

This approximate one hour talk will be in Liverpool World Museum's Treasure House Theatre, William Brown Street, Liverpool L1. It will be preceded by attendance at the scheduled 45 minute demonstration of how a Samurai armour is worn, and an explanation of the individual components: how they work and why.

Arrive for 10.00 am at the Museum foyer for distribution of tickets. The armour performance commences 10.30 am after which society members will remain in the theatre for the talk to continue until approximately 12.30 pm.

We hope afterwards to go for a bite to eat (probably not Japanese as it's Saturday lunchtime, but there's a recommended Chinese eating place nearby). If you let us know when replying if you're likely to be joining us we'll book an appropriate space.

It's important that we know how many JSNW members are expected so we can reserve seats in the very popular Samurai demonstration. Respond please to David Willis (dwillis@jsnw.org.uk) or by phone (01704-878994, leave message on answerphone).

Venue: World Museum Liverpool



October Event

Discovering Japan through Textiles and Kimono, a Personal Journey

Graham Worth, an academic and expert on Japanese textile crafts from Manchester Metropolitan University, has agreed to give a talk to JSNW members in October. The event will take place on an evening in early October and the venue will be the All Saints Campus of Manchester Metropolitan University.

Graham is a JSNW member who has made several visits to Japan, meeting and working with some of the most highly skilled Japanese craftsmen dyers and kimono makers. In particular he has been spending time with the dyer Nasu san, some of whose exquisite work we will see photographed as part of Graham's talk.

Watch for more information in the next Newsletter and on the web site.



An example of the bingata traditional dyeing technique

Japan Day

In September last year the Society invited the public to *Dip into Japan* in Lymm. The success of the event, with between 150 and 200 people attending, has encouraged your Society to be more ambitious by organising a *Japan Day* in the Great Hall of Manchester Town Hall on Saturday 21 October. A key objective of the Society, and therefore of *Japan Day*, is to bring an understanding and appreciation to the people of the Northwest of the people, culture and language of Japan. However this event also gives us a great opportunity to publicise and promote the Society much more widely and therefore hopefully to grow our membership.

The Society is delighted that its patron, the Japanese Ambassador, has accepted our invitation to attend and that the Lord Mayor of Manchester will receive the Ambassador.

We could not have held *Dip into Japan* without the support of Japan Airlines, a longstanding member of the present and previous Societies. JAL's response to *Japan Day* has been immediate and generous and so too is the support we are receiving from the Japanese Embassy. But *Japan Day* is a major undertaking and we urgently need further financial support from our organisational members. Committee Member Steve Fensom will be in touch with you if you do not contact him first on steve.m.fensom@bnfl.com or 01925 832165.



As you might imagine it's all hands to the pumps on the Committee to organise *Japan Day* and as the event approaches we will need the support of our members to help both before and on the day. If you can offer a little of your time please contact Alice Hynes on arh@paulcan.free-online.co.uk or 0151 928 0820.

Japan Day promises to be a great event – bigger, better, more varied in its attractions and even more successful than *Dip into Japan*. So put the date in your diary now:

Saturday 21st October is Japan Day

We'll remind you again (and again...) and please help if you can!

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Venue: Manchester Town Hall



Regional Events

30 June – 6 July 2006	Tony Takitani The first story by Haruki Murakami to be adapted for cinema, TONY TAKITANI is the story of one man (Issey Ogata) whose solitude and self-sufficiency leave him isolated. When he meets Eiko (Miyazawa Rie), his life changes. Employing narrative and cinematic devices and a soundtrack by Ryuichi Sakamoto, director Jun Ichikawa succeeds in translating Murakami's sense of strange otherworldliness of to the screen.	Cornerhouse, 70 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 5NH
Various	Samurai Armour Hands on demonstration suitable for all the family. Find out about the history and traditions of the Samurai and see a volunteer get dressed up in replica armour. Places are free but numbers are limited. Collect your free ticket in advance from the Information Desk.	Treasure House Theatre, World Museum Liverpool liverpoolmuseums.org.uk
16 July 2006	Bukex North A large exhibition of bonsai but also other things Japanese.	01204 884432 enquires@bonsaiartists.co.uk

News

JAPAN SOCIETY AWARDS 2006

Japan Society North West members will be pleased to hear that one of two Japan Society Awards for this year was presented to Keith Haines. The Awards mark significant work in the field of Anglo-Japanese relations by those who have not otherwise been recognised.

Keith is approaching retirement as the Deputy General Manager of Japan Airlines and the key contact of JSNW with the airline, which is a corporate member of our Society. He was ever encouraging and provided considerable assistance to us for the "Dip into Japan" event we held in Lymm. He and his colleague Robert Rigby are already offering generous support for Japan Day in October.

The (London based) Japan Society's announcement of the Award praised Keith's efforts for the Society *"Through thirty-seven years of service with Japan Airlines, Keith Haines has played a crucial role in supporting Anglo-Japanese friendship and exchange. Mr Haines has been a central figure in facilitating academic, business and cultural visits between the two countries. He has been*

tireless and enthusiastic in his support for Japan-related activities and events throughout the UK and orchestrated JAL's significant contribution to both the 1991 Japan Festival and Japan 2001. He has for many years been JAL's key representative on the Japan Society and is a member of its Membership Committee. That his efforts have gone well beyond the call of duty is reflected in the role that he played in supporting family members following the tragic Japan Airlines crash in 1985. As he approaches retirement, it seems highly appropriate to publicly recognise Keith's personal contribution to forging links between our two cultures with a Japan Society Award".

The second award was made to Mr Eiji Seki, a retired Japanese diplomat who had twice served at the Embassy in London and had pursued tirelessly his deep interest in Anglo-Japanese relations.

Our Society takes this opportunity to congratulate Keith on deservedly receiving this award and to thank him for the support that JAL, and he personally, have continuously given to JSNW and its forerunner, UKJSNW.

Jewish Haiku

News of a craze sweeping New York: the Jewish haiku. The author of this little titbit (taken from the Daily Telegraph) considers "this new hybrid conveys many more layers of meaning than the pretentious Japanese originals". See what you think of these:

Her lips near my ear,
Aunt Sadie whispers the name
Of her friend's disease.

Beyond Valium,
The peace of knowing
One's child is an internist.

Hard to tell under the lights.
White yarmulke or
Male-pattern baldness.

Like a bonsai tree,
Your terrible posture
At my dinner table.

Government Plans to Ban 'Samurai swords'

Steve Smith has updated us on some draft legislation that could have an extreme effect on serious collectors of swords.

The Government may have slipped up in proposing a ban on the carrying of weapons – a definition, which it is feared, may lead to prohibition on the transport and display of Samurai swords. The proposed legislation is intended to deal with gangsters and other criminals using cheap foreign replica swords in the furtherance of crime.

However, it seems their choice of phrase for a replica is a 'Samurai sword'. This obviously over-simplifies the problem and encapsulates it in a thoroughly inaccurate term. Rather worse, the currently proposed legislation does not differentiate between genuine, historically significant art swords and cheap modern replicas.

The idea that there is a problem in this country with genuine swords being used by criminals does not seem to be supported by any evidence: there are no statistics in existence to show a single instance of a genuine antique sword being used in crime.

There is a danger also that this choice of target may be taken as an implied insult to Japan – as though the sword

of Japan is somehow inherently criminal in nature. There is also the matter that these objects, largely in private collections, represent a significant body of Japanese culture present in this country. To eliminate them from private ownership would deprive this country of a great body of academic knowledge of Japanese culture, and condemn future generations to derive their knowledge of Japan only from the distorted products of Hollywood and Manga comics.

The To-Ken Society has sent letters of objection to the Home Office about the proposal; you can find them on www.northerntokensociety.co.uk

Loincloths Emerging as Cool Product for Summer in Japan

Loincloths are being marketed by the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo's Ginza district as a feature product for the summer months ahead, it has emerged.



A boom in the sale of loincloths has been seen since last spring, and in just half a year the department store has sold about 5,000 loincloths -- roughly 25 times the normal number it sells.

"They're unconstrained and have got good ventilation, and they're suited for Japan's humid summers," a department store official said.

The popularity of loincloths has reportedly continued even during the colder months, with about 200 loincloths being sold monthly in winter.

The store predicts that that a full-scale loincloth boom is eminent. It has prepared an abundant range of products for customers, from sleek designs featuring dots, goldfish, and fireworks, to loincloths that come with matching T-shirts.

With the hot summer months ahead, the loincloths may add a new twist to the "Cool-biz" trend of dressing down to cool off. (Mainichi) May 21, 2006

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Event Review:

Tatton's Japanese Gardens

As our group gathered, awaiting the formal start of this visit, there were quite a few nervous looks at the dark thunderclouds overhead. Fortunately however on this occasion the doom-laden weather forecast wasn't quite correct and the spots held off for the duration of what proved to be an excellent, and sunny, tour of the Japanese gardens.

This was a private visit for JSNW members under the guidance of Tatton's famous Head Gardener, and Society Member, Sam Youd. Sam outlined the history of Tatton Park and its two historic houses, and how the 1000 acres of beautiful parkland came to be developed. Of particular interest was his involvement over many years in efforts to persuade Cheshire County Council (which manages, maintains and finances Tatton Park on behalf of the National Trust) to take the badly neglected Japanese gardens under their wing. Eventually the gardens, originally built between 1910-1913, received a major renovation in 2001. Sam covered in some depth the work

that was involved in the restoration, using records of the garden's construction, research work undertaken by the Osaka University of Art, and the skills of Japanese craftsmen brought in specially for the task.

Most experts agree this is the finest Japanese garden in the United Kingdom and Ireland. In the style of a tea garden connected to an island upon which rests a Shinto shrine, its memorable features include a teahouse and handsome bamboo enclosure fences. Sam provided an insight into the spectacular colouring and planting of the Garden as well as an especially welcome explanation of the numerous features that have special significance to Japanese culture and religious beliefs.

Every season brings it own beauty here, and we were rewarded both with glorious spring colours but also the opportunity to tour the gardens from within and outside the bamboo enclosure to view its many subtly-designed changes of perspective.

A rewarding visit, which was completed for some by afternoon tea in the (English) tearoom. The visit concluded with heart-felt thanks to Sam Youd for an excellent tour.

