

Meeting Report Royal Armouries April 6th 2019.

On the 6th of April the Society held a regional meeting at the Royal Armouries Museum Leeds.

The Location



For those who are unfamiliar with the museum it is a purpose built unit built in the early 1990's to house the massive collection of armours and Armour that had previously been stored, largely unseen, at the Tower of London. It is probably one of the most comprehensive collections of arms and armour in the world.

Amongst the museum's many reassures is its collection of Asian arms and armour. Much of this collection is beautifully displayed and it contains many pieces thought to be unique. IN 2001 the collection of Japanese weapons was greatly enhanced when following the untimely death of Mr. Deryk Ingham his family donated his collection comprising of 57 swords and a number of tsuba and other fittings, to the museum.



The Study Day

The museum kindly agreed to make a number of swords from this collection available for study on the day.

As we had on our previous meeting at the Armouries the day was split in to a morning session comprising of a number of presentations followed by afternoon sessions in the viewing room and Oriental gallery.

Following a brief introduction outlining the schedule for the day Ian Bottomley gave a presentation tracing the history of armours presented by the Japanese to European nobility . This fascinating presentation described a number of armours presented by such notable Japanese figures as Toyotomi Hideyoshi and a number of Tokugawa Shoguns. Through his considerable research Ian was able to outline the history of a number of the armours, to whom they were presented and their subsequent movement and history. He related this to two armours normally on display within the Museum.

Ian's presentation was followed by a brief introduction to Deryk Ingham's collection and the swords to be viewed. Deryk assembled his collection between the late 1960's and late 90s and as well as having the opportunity to study some exceptional swords the display also offered a unique snapshot of collecting in the late 20th century. The fact Deryk was able to put such a collection together and carry out such detailed appraisal using such limited information as was available is a great credit to his enthusiasm and ability.

In the Afternoon and to meet the Museum's security requirements the group split in to two. The first went to the viewing room with Paul Bowman the second toured the Asian Gallery with Ian Bottomley. After an hour and 15 minutes the groups swapped over.

The Swords:

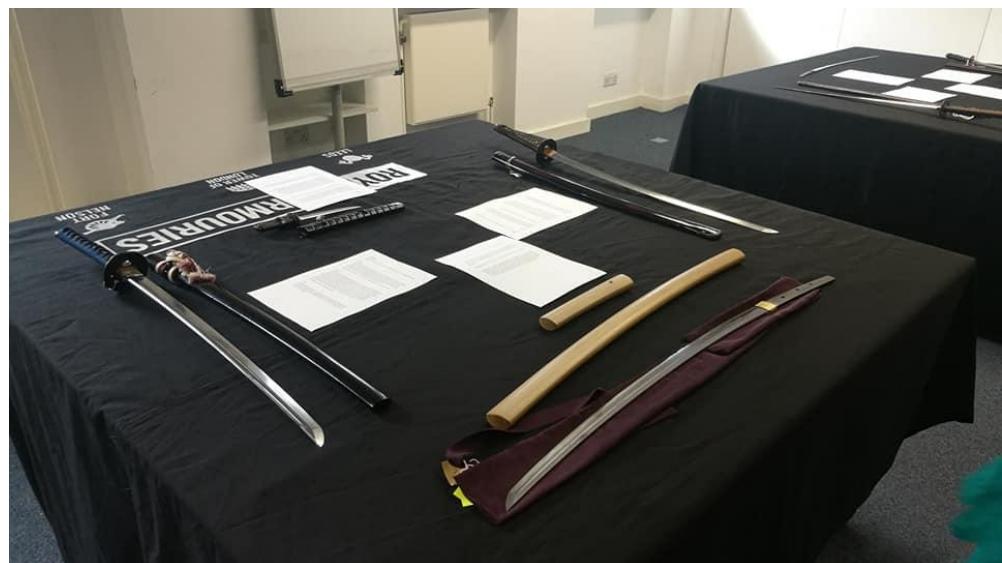
WE selected 16 swords from the collection to view. The aim was to offer a comprehensive overview of the breadth of Deryk's collection as well and having the opportunity to see some of the best blades some of which had been taken out of the gallery displays for the purpose.

1. Nagamaki Naoshi – “Ishigiri” with Juyo attribution to Unji late Kamakura to Nambokacho period. Cat no **369**
2. Katana with kinzogan mei to Muramasa polished by Kenji Mishina
3. Katana with Tokubetsu attribution to Naotsuna cat no. **367**
4. Katana signed Kanemoto cat no. **366**
5. Katana Bizen Okoyama Fujiwara Kunimune cat no. **339**
6. Naginata Naoshi- Attributed to Shizu cat no. **354**
7. Tanto in black koshirae Tamba no kami Yoshimichi cat no. **364**
8. Chisa katana with Iris leaf blade signed Sukesada and dated 15th century. Cat no. **329**
9. Katana signed Tamba no kami Yoshi (suriage) cat no. **325**

10. Tanto in beautiful same koshirae. Kogarasaru maru blade signed Sho-in Nobukuni
15th century cat no **352**
11. Naginata Etchu no kami Masatoshi cat no. **365**
12. Katana attributed to Rai (possibly Kunitoshi but doubtful) cat no. **336**
13. Katana in naval mounts Fukuoka Sukechika 17th century blade cat no.**337**
14. Katana signed Ryokai interesting blade look especially at the activity within the hada
(Echizen Rai?) cat no 351
15. Katana attributed to Shizu cat no **330**
16. Wakazashi- attributed to Bungo Takeda but with earlier attribution to Osafune
School. Cat no. **346**

Splitting in to two groups ensured everyone had ample opportunity to examine the swords on display. The viewing room offered an excellent environment and allowed everyone sufficient space to view swords in a relaxed manner. Everyone will have had their own favourites for me the highlights include the Nagamaki Naoshi attributed to Unji, The Naotsuna, the Muramasa and the wakazashi attributed to Bungo Takeda. They were exceptional pieces and it was fantastic to have the opportunity to study these works hands on and in great detail.





The Gallery Tour

While I was in the sword room with each group Ian gave the other group a tour of the Japanese gallery. He offered a considerable insight in to the pieces on display and everyone I spoke to afterwards were extremely happy and had learned a great deal.





Conclusion:

Feedback from the day has been very positive and once again has demonstrated the benefit of holding such regional meetings. We gain the opportunity to see pieces not normally available, to learn from experienced collectors and authorities within their field such as Ian Bottomley and we have the chance to meet each other and share our common interest.

As always the Museum went to great lengths to accommodate us. Amongst the swords seen several were taken off display in the oriental gallery to enable us to view them properly. I would like to conclude by offering special thanks to Ian Bottomley whose presentation and subsequent gallery tours contributed immensely to the enjoyment of the day and to Natasha Bennett and Scot Hurst of the Royal Armouries who looked after us so well. I hope we will be able to hold a similar event at some point in the future.



Paul Bowman

April 2019