

Meeting report- Gullane 26th October 2019.

On Saturday 26th October the Token Society of Great Britain held its first regional meeting in Scotland. We met in the small village of Gullane which sits on the coast a few miles south of Edinburgh. The meeting was very well attended with approximately 30 participants coming from as far afield as north of Inverness, the southern coast of England and all stops in between.

The day comprised of 3 formal presentations followed by a kantei session in the afternoon. Details of these can be seen below. There was also a sales table for members and a display of swords and fittings from various participants' collections.

Presentations:

Myths and Symbolism in Tosugu- Ian Chapman offered a fascinating insight in to some of the symbolism and stories seen in fittings. He illustrated the content of his presentation with some exceptional tsuba, menuki and Fuchi-Kashira which clearly demonstrated the points being made. It was particularly interesting to learn how apparently unrelated items (Mount Fuji and a Hawk or an Aubergine) were brought together to tell a single story or offer a particular message.



Urushi and Urushi Techniques- Mike Hickman-Smith gave an excellent presentation describing how Urushi was collected and refined and details of how different finishes were achieved when lacquering saya. When listening to Mike the incredible skill and patience needed to achieve such beautiful end results were very obvious as was his own commitment and enthusiasm for his craft.





Kantei as learning tool- Paul Bowman completed the formal presentations with an introduction to kantei, outlining why it is such a useful approach in the study of swords. He confirmed his belief that using the disciplined approach to view a blade as used in kantei offered the most effective methodology to study swords in detail and to attempt to reach a meaningful appraisal of a blade in hand.

Following a break for lunch the attendees were invited to participate in an informal kantei. After a brief confirmation of the necessary etiquette and approach to handling swords safely participants had the opportunity to view 5 swords and to attempt to identify the features in each.

The kantei swords were:

1. **A tachi by Oei Bizen Yasumitsu dating from the late 14th/early 15th century.**



2. **A shinto katana by Shodai Hizen Masahiro**



3. **A shin-shinto Hira-zukuri ko-wakazashi by Koyama Munetsugu**



4. **A Shinto katana signed Kotetsu**



5. **A shin-shinto katana by Nobushige.**



Following the viewing Paul Bowman gave a description of each blade and identified the features which should lead the observer to a correct identification.

**As a small side note normally one would only use fully authenticated and typical works of a given school or smith in kantei. To use anything else could mislead and negate any benefit. The Kotetsu blade used has not been authenticated and there is considerable inconsistency in opinions between various authorities as to whether or not it is an authentic work by this very famous smith. However it does exhibit all of the characteristics one would expect to see in a sword by the smith and is of very good quality. We therefore felt justified in using it for this exercise and clearly explained the history regarding past appraisals.*

There was a high level of participation and interest in this exercise and the general feedback confirmed that people found it very helpful .

The remainder of the day was spent in informal discussion, looking at pieces brought by members to share and very interesting conversation. The feedback recieved from participants was overwhelmingly positive. It was particularly pleasing to see so many new faces, people who may have had a background in martial arts but who had not until now had the opportunity to look at swords in this detail. Hopefully running such events will inspire them to join the Token Society and take part in future activity both north and south of the border.

Finally I would like to thank Robert Boyd and Colin Thompson for arranging the venue and food for us. The event ran smoothly, the technology worked and we were well fed. Many thanks gentlemen.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to Ryan Stewart for supplying the majority of images.

Paul Bowman

29/10/19

