

THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN
for the Study and Preservation of Japanese Swords and Fittings



HON. PRESIDENT. B.W. ROBINSON, M.A., B.LITT.

SECRETARY. H. M. HUTCHINSON, 141 NORK WAY, BANSTEAD, SURREY.

PROGRAMME No. 77.

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1973

NEXT MEETING

Monday 3rd December, 7.30 p.m. at the Princess Louise, High Holborn. To get there: Underground to Holborn, turn west, cross Kingsway and the P.L. is 50 yards down on the left hand side.

FOLLOWING MEETING

Monday 7th January at Princess Louise 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECTS:

December: Blade session - members to bring swords - any sword for a group judgement. You may even find out what it is. PLUS AUCTION.

January: Probably a Blade session as continuation of December, but yet to be decided. PLUS AUCTION.

February: Lacquer by Fred Maitland. Don't miss this one. PLUS AUCTION.

Japanese Meal - 8 p.m. 17th December at Tokio Restaurant, Swallow Street, Piccadilly, London.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It is too soon to make a report as we have had only one meeting under the new committee. However, I think we all sensed a rejuvenation of the Society's image and we were pleased to see that nearly everyone took part in the discussions at the November meeting. We were able to set out a considerable number of proposed changes with unanimity of agreement by those present.

Your committee are now involved in arranging some fine lectures, more films, and changes in programme format, etc., and these are reported elsewhere by our programme editor. I am a great believer in getting results by experiment and we can alter and change things as we go so as to fall in with the wishes of the members who show up to the meetings. The main object of your committee is to make the meetings more and more interesting and to impart knowledge.

JULY MEETING - Notes on Japan by Colin Nunn

I have been asked specifically not to talk all about swords but to give a general airing on my last visit to Japan - a light-hearted airing.

So let's start with an exhibition of over 300 swords at the Mitsukushi (a very large department store in Tokio). An absolutely fantastic exhibition - two of us arrived armed with cameras to capture the sights for posterity and fellow members. Having set up my camera and about to snap we were attacked by an armed guard - "No cameras. No cameras" - he said and made it obvious he wasn't going to allow us to use them. Having partly prepared for explanation by having my cards printed in Japanese before I left U.K., I produced one and explained who I was - no effect whatsoever, damned fellow had never heard of me. Even a plea to the store manager was to no avail. An armed escort attached themselves to us and we could not even point at the exhibits (seems they had heard about him after all). Yet children got away with anything - pulling at armour and one father even put a Kabuto on his sons head and rolled up with laughter - all very funny. It was obvious that they did not like swords being photographed - someone suggested because we were foreigners.

(I believe it was merely the particular organisers of that particular exhibition, for I have taken photos at three sword exhibitions in stores in Japan without any trouble at all - Ed.)

Although it may be considered that Europeans do not know anything about swords - it is also true that the majority of Japanese have very little knowledge either. When asking questions it appeared they all knew what a Katana and Wakasashi was but if you mentioned Fuchi Kasmira they thought you were swearing at them. (Not surprising really, for sword terms are technical terms and would only be known to those who understand the subject - i.e. Fuchi could mean a pool - an edge - scenic beauty etc. Kasmira - a head - or I wonder etc. Ed.)

One point of interest is the system of buying and selling. It is a very definite two tier system. At auctions in Japan

members of the public cannot buy, you must be a member of the dealers association and that association runs the auctions. It is very much a closed shop and you stand no chance of getting in. They do the buying, they put the price on and the collector will buy from them. Not like our salerooms where anyone can bid. Possibly some day we will wish we had done something on similar lines - food for thought. I tried to join but it appears to be a case of if your face fits you're in - if not - no go.

Points of interest in Japan: the first thing that struck us there were the tall buildings. I thought that being as it is prone to earthquakes that all the buildings would be small. However, the 40-storey buildings put paid to that idea.

Their television is fantastic - 10 channels, all coloured, plus Catweazle speaking fluent Japanese. The dubbing is done so well you would imagine we borrowed from them. Samurai films run at four a night, great favourites. I would think that a great deal of money could be made if they were shown over here, they really are good. The Seven Samurai and The Forbidden Fortress have got nothing on the modern day Roy Rogers type Samurai with Winchesters they really are entertaining.

The pollution problem is what everyone says it is and traffic is like torrents. Many people wear masks and it seemed too many to have colds. For as you know the mask is worn by Japanese when with cold to try to prevent it being passed on, but it would seem now that it is also used to ease the inhalation of fumes.

No one rushes, unless of course you're in the middle of an 8-lane highway and the lights change - then you really move for they just don't care - the road is theirs and you shouldn't be there. The standard of driving is incredible - if you drove like it over here you would be banned for life. As a deterrent they have dummy policemen, full sized, that they put at conspicuous places. These have the same effect as coming down the M1 at 90 and seeing a police car parked on the hard shoulder. You slow down - temporarily! The Japanese go one stage further, by replacing the dummy at a later stage with a real policeman and by the time you realise the difference, it's too late. The police are violent. At the hotel I was staying were a Chinese delegation and there were a lot of demonstrations against the Chinese. One particular night the demonstrations were going rather strong and the Riot Police with their shields, face masks and clubs were whacking everything that moved. The following morning

some enthusiastic Japanese chained his car to the railings and locked himself in and kept shouting through a loudspeaker "Down with the Chinese" - in English! The police arrived with a breakdown lorry, put a chain round his car, ripped his car from the railings and towed him off up the street still shouting anti Chinese slogans.

John Harding entertained us one night - at great expense no doubt - at a chicken place where everything that you eat is chicken - it was quite fantastic. One of the things we had was a number of red balls on a stick which John told us was a great delicacy. When we asked what they were, they turned out to be unlaidd chickens eggs. They did look pretty repulsive. The night life is very very expensive, so be warned.

Just a few do's and don'ts. Don't whatever you do, if you're conversing with a Japanese and you think you are getting on very well with him, say 'look Mr. Kamura or whatever your name is, what is your Christian name?' The chap I said it to said 'I am a Zen Bhuddist, what is this Christian name?' Apart from that you have to know them very well to use their given name. Never call a taxi driver a Kamikaze pilot - he may drive like one but he will probably survive even if you don't. Japanese are extremely polite and try to please no matter what. They are quite likely to say 'Yes' in answer to a question, not because they understand but because they think it will please you. Result, ask for 4 post cards and receive 2 coathangers from a charming lady.

An amusing incident occurred when we went shopping in a Tokio store. My friend took his shoes off and carried them around with him. Everyone thought it very amusing and he was told that it was very polite but not necessary - you only take your shoes off in a house. What they didn't know was that we had been walking all day and his feet hurt.

One experience you shouldn't miss is the Bullet Train (Tokaido Express) - it is really something! Their trains are fantastic - if they say the train will arrive at 7.22 it arrives at 7.22 exactly. It even pulls up at a predetermined spot. The use of the Japanese style loo at 150 miles per hour is not recommended - they are not for the modest.

A brief mention on polishing for I doubt if members realise the problems involved:

- 1) A habaki is made but the chap who makes them doesn't want to know - for a good habaki he can get £100 so why make £10 versions.

- 2) It goes for the 1st polish - but there are problems here too. A polisher can get £200 for polishing a good sword so the cheaper sword gets put back. (Should the blade be in a bad state then a preliminary polish will take place prior to the habaki fitting).
- 3) The Shira Saya is made.
- 4) Back for final polish.

After polishing comes the submission for Shinsa and this can be a long wait. Each stage takes weeks. Also the group of swords sent out for polishing are returned as a group - so the first one done must wait till the last one is finished. Polishers both good and bad have all got plenty of work and they can choose what they do and when they do it. So good luck, if you go on Sydney's trip, you will have a really wonderful experience - don't miss it.

OCTOBER MEETING

This being the annual general meeting brought our attendance down to 21 members. The meeting was delayed until 8.30 in the vain hope of more members turning up. As is normal with our procedure, the existing committee stood down but for the sake of order John Anderson remained in the Chair to adjudicate.

Andrew Ford sent in his apologies - he is in Yugoslavia which would make it difficult to attend - he however offered himself for election if required.

The procedure is as follows - the members elect the Committee. The Committee decide amongst themselves the various jobs. The Chairman is elected by the Committee but must have previously served as a committee member.

The previous committee was of eight members, one member having previously resigned, regrettably, namely Bill Baxter as Treasurer.

Members offering themselves for re-election were Malcolm Hutchinson, David Parker, Tony Chapman, Ted Newman and Andrew Ford. Those not offering were Alan Bale and John Anderson, both gentlemen stating they were standing down in the hope that new blood would be a good idea and both had served for a considerable few years.

It was then put to the floor for the selection and election of the Committee. It would be pointless to go into it in depth, therefore only the main points will be dealt with. John Anderson quite rightly pointed out to members how easy it is for members to complain that insufficient is being done, not enough subjects or lectures - but on the other hand literally no help comes from the general members in the way of suggestions, letters, offers of help, etc. Chairmanship is not an enviable job but damned hard work.

The election was carried out as normal by show of hands on individuals, the following being elected:

Malcolm Hutchinson, David Parker, Tony Chapman, Ted Newman, Andrew Ford, Colin Nunn, Tony Gibbs, Sidney Divers, Chris Allan. (The voting in general being unanimous).

Sidney Divers proposed a vote of thanks to the old Committee especially John Anderson and Alan Bale for all the work they have done. The members applauded with vigour, for they have both done an excellent job and have, at times, carried the weight of the Society between them. There is no doubt that they will continue to support the society in the fine way they have served it.

The Arms Fair was briefly dealt with. A number of new members were forthcoming as a direct result, one from West Germany, one from Belgium and one for Ireland. A number of proposal forms were taken so there may well be some new members from that direction. We also sold £1.50p worth of old journals. For those who attended it was very nice to chat and meet some of our overseas members who seemed to be in greater abundance than local members. All in all it was worthwhile and our thanks go out to the usual band of helpers, who need no mention, who made it so.

Japanese Trip - 21 firm bookings so far but many others are interested, so it is definitely on. There are only 4 Token members at present, the rest being made up of businessmen. Sidney Divers stated his concern at the lack of support from members and how he may well fare should he chance bringing a polisher from Japan. Apart from all the cost involved which he would have to stand, say only seven swords were presented for polishing? Some members protested that although the trip was an excellent chance, it was also one that they could not afford - possibly £500 to cover expenses and trip as well as the two weeks that in some circumstances is their total holiday. Leaving nothing, neither time or money for the family holidays. It was also pointed out that a trip to Japan was one way to spend money and although one had memories, that was all, whereas

money spent on sword polishing did result with the sword owner having a very fine polished sword.

It is easy to see both sides of the story and understand. However, from the Society's point of view, what could be greater for our image and future than for a large group of Token members to enjoy the hospitality of our opposite members in Japan. For those who go you will return with knowledge you could not get here and learn more in a few days than you could in years. It's more than a trip, it's an education.

Possibly we may take up the sword polishing at a later day for it is getting next to impossible to get a polish in Japan these days and have the sword returned in a reasonable time.

It was suggested that since our November meeting fell on the 5th, it would be better to change it. However, since we have decided to have our meetings on the first Monday of every month, it would be unwise to change. Overseas members who visit us from time to time can safely plan months ahead and know when we are in session and be sure they will not be arriving at an empty room.

John Anderson then closed the meeting, turning over to the new Committee for the coming year.

The Committee meeting then followed. The results of which are as follows:

Chairman	-	Sidney Divers
Vice Chairman	-	Colin Nunn
Secretary	-	Malcolm Hutchinson
Programme Secretary	-	Tony Chapman
Treasurer	-	Chris Allan
Swords	-	David Parker

Committee members at present without jobs are Tony Gibbs, Andrew Ford and Ted Newman. From the enthusiasm shown at the first meeting it is doubtful that these members will continue long without a definite task to perform.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Sidney Divers, the new Chairman, opened the meeting rather late, due to the fact of the very small gathering (13 members) and the hope it would improve. Also because the Programme Sec. was having trouble with the tape. Once fixed the meeting was under way.

Joe Ryan was greeted on his first visit, rather a shame he chose such a badly attended one. Still it is difficult to compete with Guy Fawkes.

The Chairman made it very clear that any rudeness from members will not be tolerated in the future and that offending member will be asked to leave. He stated that he had around him a very powerful committee and if they had been hand picked by him they could not be better. Well, let us hope that this enthusiasm will carry the Society into a very prosperous year. Notwithstanding those remarks, the committee reserve the right to co-opt anyone whom it feels will further the Society's interests. The committee will also look at all forms of sub committees. There is a great need for a blade study circle, where the sum total of all our individual knowledge can be distributed to everyone and a sub-committee of interested people could look into this. There is a present constitutional matter the present committee will look at, I think that anyone elected to the job of Chairman should sit for 12 months only and no Chairman should, even if willing, sit for 2 consecutive years.

There will be a slight rehash of the Society's image as things have been gradually sliding into the doldrums as has been generally acknowledged.

There has been considerable trading going on at our meetings that it would be ridiculous for us to close our eyes to it. In Japan no trading is permitted at Society meetings, but just because they do certain things it does not mean that we have to follow. This is the Token Society of Great Britain and we should run it irrespective of the views expressed by any other country or Society.

It was suggested that trading under strict control should be allowed. By making all dealers welcome it does mean that more and better swords would be able to be seen even if you do not buy. It would also enable country members to see what London prices are like. Also that since some will make money from this, the seller should make a donation of sorts toward the costs - rent of room etc. - and it would also help swell the funds.

If the Society at any future period hopes to obtain a permanent H.Q. or to run an exhibition, then it should have a more substantial kitty behind it than we have at present.

We have not been idle since the last meeting, which gives us one month, and since then we have been in touch with

the Japanese Embassy and they have offered us a long list of films free. So the Committee will arrange for some of these films to be shown during the year.

One of the finest lectures we have ever had, and that was many years ago, was given by Fred Maitland on lacquer. He has kindly agreed to give a lecture at our February meeting. Now lacquer is very important for sword scabbards are lacquered and the poor way that they are treated by collectors shows, I think, that a lecture on lacquer techniques is something we could all do with.

On the subject of the official Token visit to Japan, the whole trip starting from Heathrow is being filmed by Colin Nunn. This will include all the visits we make in Japan, subject of course to permission being forthcoming. He hopes to have this edited and shown at the May meeting.

It has also been suggested that we have a Japanese dinner at one of the now numerous Japanese restaurants in London. We had one many years ago at the start of the Hiroko restaurant and although it was a little slow, went off very well. The committee are working on this now.

It is also suggested that those who bring swords or fittings should say a few words about them - this was introduced before and is very useful for it helps us all including the owner.

Graham Gemmell spoke on the stolen Tsuba from Sothebys, a full description is noted later in the Programme.

Some of the aforementioned points were put to the floor for discussion, as follows:

Regards the Chairman standing for 12 months only - it was generally considered this is a matter for the Chairman himself. Since even if the constitution were changed, it could be changed back just as easily. It was felt to be a matter for the membership to decide and since so few were present it was postponed to a later date.

Trading - after much discussion it was decided to hold an auction prior to the meeting and to run this for three months as a trial.

Since dealing will take place any way, the auction system was considered the fairest way for all concerned. In this way everyone gets a look in and the seller gets a fair price - it stops the green member coming in with a good

sword and passing it over at the door so to speak at a ridiculous price.

AUCTION

The Committee have now arranged for the first auction to take place in December and to be properly controlled. All lots must be presented at 7.30 for entries to be made and numbered. The auction will take place promptly at 8 o'clock and should finish by 8.30. The Committee have all been detailed for their various duties to ensure quick and efficient running. Descriptions are not considered necessary, the buyers judgment should prevail. A reserve price may be stated. A donation of £1 for a sword and 50p for tsuba or fittings would be appreciated by the Society to aid funds.

No other trading whatsoever will be permitted within the bounds of the meeting. So please all members, your help is required to control this. This must be the best way to buy and sell and also enable us to see more swords at our meetings.

We make an effort to visit Arms Fairs so as to see and handle swords - often at prices we could not afford, but still gleaning a little knowledge for seeing them. For members it must given them a greater drive to learn and find out why some blades fetch high prices and why everyone wants them, whilst another blade is left strictly alone.

Another point - the swords will come to you, and we all know the problems of searching for them and rushing off on hopeless quests through adverts.

Blade Study Circle - this again created a very long discussion with the main factor being that we did not particularly want one person to state an emphatic view on blades. The statements must extend to why it is considered to be what it is.

From the discussions going back and forth, it was quite obvious that everyone present really wanted the blade studies to be foremost in our programme. The problem was everyone had different ways of going about it. So we start from scratch. Members are requested to bring along Numei (unsigned) blades to our December meeting and we will go through these blades and try to allocate them into their schools and periods. We may not get very far, possibly only 3 or 4 blades, but we hope all will go away with a little more knowledge than they came with. So please make your views known. If you feel a blade shown is Bizen or whatever, say so and it will either be confirmed or you will know why you are wrong. It is a pool

of knowledge and not individual overriding views. It was suggested that signed blades only should be used, so that we could check with the signature to see if we were right. O.K. if you want to base it all on signatures, just learn the characters, get hold of a list of smiths with rating values and there is no need to learn any more. The Japanese cover the tang at their sessions because it is the least important part. It is the blade that decides if the signature is genuine and not as a check if you have the blade right. So let us deal with blades. Those who read the programme will know to what extent signatures are faked (or written as attributions) and it extends even to minor smiths.

Members who buy at the auction may submit their purchases for the blade session - it is one way to find out what your judgment is like and knowledge can be expensive or lucrative.

JAPANESE MEAL

After much shopping around to obtain the best possible price we finally came up with the following: 17th December 8 p.m. Tokio Restaurant. Cost £3.08 per person and covers the whole Sukiyaki meal including VAT etc. Drinks will be paid for separately and are extras. Saki costs 75p per bottle and I should add a bottle of Saki is approximately 2/3 of a cupfull, not a pint. We have booked provisionally for 30 people but they can accommodate about 70, so there is lots of room. I might add you will not get a full Japanese meal for this price anywhere - so if you enjoy Japanese food or wish to be adventurous, now is your chance. The Tokio is situated in Swallow Street which is located 50 yards west of Piccadilly between Piccadilly and Regent Street. (It is only a short street).

PROGRAMME

The presentation of the Journal came under fire and the consensus of opinion was that we should consider having a hard cover with advertising. This is being dealt with, with a view to balancing the sale of adverts with the cost of a new cover, so we shall not end up out of pocket over it. So far the response has been extremely good. The printing of the cover and final tying up is the only part outstanding. With the present rate of progress the next Programme will be presented in its new and more secure form. It does go all over the world and links directly the majority who are interested in swords - so what better place to

advertise in. Some may say our Programme only reaches 240 people - that is true - but all are interested and I doubt very much if advertising elsewhere could reach so many of the converted.

Going back to the Sword study circle. This is not meant to comprise of little cliques who get together and contain the knowledge to themselves. It is reasonable to say that no one will know all about all schools. Therefore if the members produce small groups of say three or four who devote themselves to an individual school - tradition or style - then for instance at a Group Study, a blade may be passed to say the Bizen group, who may consider it does not fit in with Bizen swords and they can say why. The blade will then find the right group and judgment passed. We all have our likes and dislikes and this should guide us to our areas of study. We shall give much more emphasis to blade study.

SWORD POLISHING

The arrangement for Shinsa in Japan has recently been altered and now the Shinsa only meets in Tokio instead of all the regional ones. This means a terrific backlog of work for them to do and could mean a years wait just for papers. If you require a polish only and are not worried about papers then you can still get your sword back in a reasonable time. So those with swords out with David Parker please get in touch with him and let him know if you want papers - swords for papers could then be sent in a group by themselves.

LOS ANGELES SHINSA

Graham Gemmel brought us news of a Shinsa to be held in Los Angeles on the lines of the Dallas one that was held recently. Again a wonderful opportunity to see and learn about swords. Graham who has the advantage of going through the swords at Sothebys (so he does see quite a few), considered he learnt more in 4 days at Dallas than 3½ years at Sothebys. You will see brilliant beautifully polished swords of a quality you are unlikely to see elsewhere. It will cover a week to 10 days and include INRO - NETSUKE - LACQUER as well as swords and fittings.

As soon as we get more information it will be published.

STOLEN NOTICE (SOTHEBY & CO.)

On 2nd October 1973 from Sotheby & Co., a wood case, 20 ins. by 20 ins. by 5 ins. containing 101 Tsuba, all being late 19th Century, decorative guards, mainly in brass and copper although some bear shakudo, shibuichi, gold and silver decoration and detail. Subject matters are typical of this period of Tsuba, being animals in silhouette, figures from legend and every-day life, deities (e.g. Hotei, Daikoku, Ebisu etc.). All are large guards (4-5 ins. diameter) heavily carved in many cases, although fine inlay and detail work is included. One notable Tsuba is brass in the form of a wolf, the reverse being flat, carved and inlaid with a landscape. Most guards are signed although there are none by the really important artists like Kano Natsuo, Joi, Konkwan, Goto Ichijo etc. The guards are of varying, although predominantly good, quality but have been neglected for some time and are coated in surface dirt and grease with some patches of verdigris or mildew.

In relation to the above loss, attention is called to a man aged 30-35 years; 5 feet 10 inches; thick set; round face; large; dark, wide-set eyes; sallow complexion; blue chin; small rounded nose; full lips; longish, dark, wavy hair. Smartly dressed in very dark blue or black semi-military style raincoat with belt and epaulettes, who, using the name Michael Conway, 35 Vincent St., Victoria, London, S.W.1. (false) offered for sale in the West End of London on the following day, 3rd October 1973, six Tsuba including one in the form of a wolf in silhouette as described above.

If you have any information regarding the above property or person, please contact the Japanese Art Department or S. Cunningham at Sotheby and Co. at the above address, or any police station.

A reward is offered subject to the usual conditions, i.e. 10% for recovery and successful prosecution.

NEWS FROM THE NORTHERN BRANCH

The A.G.M. was held on 20th November at the new meeting place, which is Manchester Club, Spring Gardens, Manchester.

The Society has been granted the use of the premises

by the kindness of the Club members, especially Mr. Moon who is also a Token member.

At the A.G.M. the following officers were elected by the 19 members present:

Chairman - Ian Bottomley
Secretary - Stephen Turnbull
Treasurer - John Hymas

The last two positions were created to cope with the increase in costs that we as an expanding group are experiencing. The subscription will be £1 per annum.

NEXT MEETING

January 8th - Subject will be a talk and Kendo demonstration.

Meetings will take place on the 2nd Tuesday of alternate months, namely March 12th, May 14th, July 9th, Sept. 10th, Nov. 12th.

A varied programme will be presented that will include films and lectures by members. Visiting members from London will be made most welcome and we will enjoy the chance to swap experiences.

WANTS LIST

Would any member who requires fittings to complete a set; another sword to complete a Daisho; or who is interested in obtaining swords or fittings from members, please let me know and I will start a 'Wants List' in the next Programme and furthermore there will be no charge. So it's up to you - make use of the Programme, that's what it is for.

May we wish you all, wherever you may be, a Very Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

Now the year is nearly over, I hope the New Year will bring us all closer together in our quest for knowledge.

THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GT. BRITAIN
STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE
YEAR ENDING 30TH SEPTEMBER 1973

		<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Payments</u>
Balance on hand B/fwd.	Cash	£ 67.95	
	Bank	331.48	
Subscriptions		470.75	
Programme Expenses			£ 330.92
Postage			98.90
Stationery			15.36
Meetings (Room hire, etc).			39.00
Sword Polishing Service		771.05	821.81
Sword Accessories		143.66	155.67
Publications		13.54	
Arms Fair			11.20
Balance on hand C/fwd.	Cash		103.24
	Bank		222.33
		<u>£ 1798.43</u>	<u>£ 1798.43</u>

OSHIGATA

A reminder to new members who may have difficulties in reading tang inscriptions due to inadequate references; if they care to send a rubbing (oshigata) of the tang, addressed to Tony Chapman, 71 Ingaway, Basildon, Essex, he will check it for them and send them all available information he has on the swordsmith or inscription. Please remember to make a careful rubbing of the whole tang, both sides, not just the inscription.