

Recent Society Events

Nomikai

In early August some 20 of us held a social gathering to say farewell to Akiko Urushibata who has since moved to Toronto. Akiko had been a member of the Japan Society since arriving in the UK in 2002 to work with the Groundwork organisation, after several years in Japan with the same group. Not only a very sociable and likeable member she quickly became a prominent and key figure in the formation of the JSNW. Her decision to emigrate was a blow to the new committee to which she had given so freely of her time and skills.

The meal at Wagamama at The Printworks in Manchester was followed by an informal drop of the black stuff at the adjoining Irish Pub, Waxy O'Connor's, which may not have been a very Japanese ending to the evening but proved very popular with those who stayed to say a final farewell to Akiko. And if we can get a copy of this Newsletter to Toronto perhaps Akiko can be persuaded to become our Canadian correspondent to let us know how life there compares with Oldham!

Aikido

A 'select' number of members visited the headquarters in Birkenhead of the Komyokan Aikido Association. We were welcomed to the Komyokan Dojo by Ezra Sensei who was instructing some 30 members of the Dojo from across the UK. We watched as they went through a series of exercises to strengthen both body and spirit, practising a number of (what an outsider might describe as) 'throws' to overcome an attacker. Defensive moves included those against knife, staff, spear and – in a demonstration by Sensei and two pupils – real, and very dangerous looking, swords. Aikido was created by Morihei Ueshiba (1883 – 1969) as a martial art based on the principles of universal harmony, the latter being expressed also through the practice of chanting (kototama) with which we were invited to join in!

Anyone who would like to learn more about Aikido can contact Ezra Sensei at the Komyokan Aikido Association, 146 Harrowby Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside, or visit their website at

<http://www.komyokan.aikido.co.uk>.

Meet-up

Members may have come across the web-based scheme called 'Meetup'. As their web site <http://www.meetup.com> describes it: Meetup Groups share a cause or interest and meet regularly face-to-face. There are literally thousands of Meetup groups for thousands of interests. Members of the Manchester Meetup group for Japanese Conversation came along to the Nomikai and also supported our visit to the Aikido display. The Meetup groups provide an opportunity for informal meetings of like-minded people, very similar to our own interest in trying to promote and arrange for our own members opportunities for conversation in Japanese. Perhaps we could have some joint events; certainly Meetup members are likely to be interested to hear about our Society and our activities. If you are a member of Meetup perhaps you could let them have some of our leaflets. Please let us know if you have any experience with this scheme or other groups with which you think we may be able to cooperate.

Leaflet

The Society's leaflet has been updated; there are some important changes so please destroy any old copies that may be under coffee mugs or even in your in-tray. Four copies are enclosed with this Newsletter. Please keep one and take a look at the Future Events Programme: some changes have been made to reflect demand and circumstances. Again, could you please pass the spare copies to friends and colleagues who may be interested in what the Society has to offer. The membership subscriptions in the Leaflet are for a full year, from the date that the subscription is received by the Society. We need to grow the membership base and word of mouth is one of the best (and cheapest!) ways of doing so. If you have not yet joined (or rejoined) you might like to use one of the copies to do so!

Please Help

It is disappointing to have to report so early in the life of the Society that three Committee Members have resigned. Akiko Urushibata, as you have already read, is now in Canada. But alas Ian Munro, the Society's Chairman, and Cathy Peel have resigned for personal reasons. Both have said that they will continue to support the Society as members. It is a great shame that the Committee will not now benefit from their contributions.

Your Committee has worked hard in recent months to develop the "new" Society and we intend to continue that commitment. However one of the key skills that we would like to bring to the Committee is that of "publicity & media". Is there a member out there who could spare a little time to help the Society by developing and implementing a strategy to bring awareness of the Society and its events to potential members in the North West? If so, please contact the Secretary, David Woolf, at davenann@btinternet.com or telephone 01925 755097.

Events Programme

We are looking to organise innovative events with a Japanese theme in interesting and convenient venues for which we need your ideas. Put your thinking caps on and email or telephone the Secretary, David Woolf, on davenann@btinternet.com & 01925 755097 or the Membership Secretary, Neil Willis, on jsnw_membership@hotmail.com & 0151 207 9133.

Here are the Society's events for the remainder of this calendar year. Although November and December may seem some way off, you'll be buying presents and sending cards sooner than you think! Newsletter No 3 will not be published until the turn of the year, so reminders for the following events will be sent by email only.

"Ukiyo-e"

Venue: Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery, Museum Street, Blackburn BB1 7AJ

Date: Saturday October 23rd

Time: 1130 (gather in the Foyer at 1120)

Duration: 2 hours approximately

Museum visit: Members free. Non-Members £3 (pay on the day).

To be followed by lunch at a local restaurant (optional).

Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery, unlikely as it may seem, holds a remarkable collection of Japanese artifacts but especially woodblock prints, "ukiyo-e", many collected by Thomas Boys Lewis and donated to the Museum. The entire sequence "The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokkaido" by

Hiroshige was recently on public exhibition. Other artists represented include Utamaro, Kunisada and Toyokuni to name but a few. As well as being able to view the items in the permanent exhibition the Keeper of Art, Pauline Birtwell, will take us behind the scenes to see what members of the public do not normally have access to: the large and varied reserve collection of artifacts and actor, kimono and landscape prints.

This is a unique opportunity for members to enjoy privileged access to art of the highest order which so influenced European art of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Then, if you wish, join other members for lunch and a chat.

“Speakeasy”

Venue: Central Liverpool, venue to be confirmed

Date: 10th November

Time: 7.30 – 9.30

Free!

Do you feel like practising your Japanese? Or just listening to others? As many of you have expressed an interest in learning Japanese, we’ve planned an evening of gentle exposure to the language, including some games to help you learn a few simple characters and phrases.

We’ll also be hearing from interpreter Angela Davies. With extensive experience of Japanese people and culture, Angela has a wealth of stories about her exploits in the country, which she’s kindly agreed to share with us.

And you can rest assured there’ll still be time for a drink and a chat!

It promises to be a fun evening, and if you fancy impressing your friends by being able to order a beer or write your name in Japanese, it’s not to be missed. Details on the exact venue will appear closer to the date.

“Bonenkai”

Venue: New Samsi Restaurant, Whitworth Street, Manchester.

Date: Friday December 17th

Time: 7pm onwards

The Samsi restaurant serves just about the most authentic Japanese cuisine of any restaurant in the North West, so has become the regular venue for the Japan Society. Enjoy an end of year feast with fellow members and guests and get a reduction on the restaurant’s regular prices! Be sure to put the date in your diaries now!

There are four banquet menus: Vegetarian (£15.50), A Taste of Japan (£17.50), Samurai Feast (£22.50) and Sumo Wrestler Feast (£26.50). Members who pay a deposit and order one of these in advance will get a reduction of £3.00 on the above prices. Non-Members and Guests will pay the full restaurant prices. Drinks are extra and Tips are at your discretion.

For information about the restaurant and details of the menus visit www.samsi.co.uk

Regional Events

Few Japan-related events seem to be happening in our region over the coming months. Here are details of the few that the Society has been able to identify. The information is provided in good faith, but we advise you to check with the venue before you set off!

18 Sept	28 Nov	<i>Takashi Murakami at the 2004 Liverpool Biennale.</i> Artist Murakami has been invited to create a new work for the Liverpool Biennale's showpiece 2004 International Exhibition.	info@biennial.org.uk www.biennial.org.uk
Sept.	Dec.	<i>Japan Season.</i> Films and other Japanese productions.	Parr Hall & Pyramid Centre, Warrington, Cheshire. 01925 442345
11 Oct	17 Oct	<i>Sheffield International Documentary Film Festival.</i> The only documentary film and television festival in the UK. Includes at least 5 Japanese documentary films.	Sheffield's Showroom. www.sidf.co.uk
2 Nov	6 Nov	<i>Hamlet.</i> <i>The celebrated Japanese director's English language production.</i>	The Lowry, Salford Quays. www.thelowry.com 0870 787 5790
15 Nov	-	<i>Mitsuko Uchida plays Schubert & Beethoven.</i> <i>Uchida is one of the greatest classical pianists of our time.</i>	Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk 0161 907 9000