



**Japan  
Society  
North  
West**

**Newsletter No 3  
January 2005**

**Akemashite Omedeto Gozaimasu – Happy New Year to all Members.**

### **Recent Society Events**

Ukiyo-e: Japanese Woodblock Prints

This event was postponed due to the poor response of members to that particular date. However a number of members requested that it be rescheduled: it will now be held on 29<sup>th</sup> January – see later in this Newsletter.

Speakeasy

During our weekend in Warrington in the summer (where the Society had a stall at the Japanese festival) quite a few prospective members and those who signed up expressed interest in speaking Japanese. Our first 'speak Japanese' evening was held in Liverpool, where we squeezed into a corner of a rather noisy bar to be entertained (in English) for part of the evening by Angela Davies and her tales of life as a translator both here and in Japan. To be honest most of the Japanese conversation was between Angela and Azumi but the rest of us enjoyed the evening, especially Angela's store of stories. How about the (supposedly true) one of Prime Minister Koizumi greeting President Clinton with a 'Who are you?' rather than 'How are you?' Clinton replies 'I am Hilary's husband, who are you?' to which the PM says 'so am I'. Or then again the German translator who translated 'hydraulic ram' as 'water sheep'!

Angela mentioned "When working for the Japanese Government at the Osaka Expo in 1990 I had a young Australian girl as my assistant. One day, this same girl was delighted to tell me that she had bought a new settee and chairs very cheaply but which you assembled yourself. "Can you do that by yourself?" I asked. "Oh there's no problem," she answered confidently. They said the/a 'driver' would come too. Now in Japanese there are no definite or indefinite articles, so the next day I said "well did you get your settee and chairs fixed up by the driver?". "Oh, no" she replied despondently " it wasn't the driver, but a screwdriver they meant!"

Bonenkai

A few of us did make it to the New Samsi Restaurant, and were rewarded by simply splendid Japanese food. The restaurant has new vigour, both in the kitchen and in the basement where shabu-shabu and similar dishes are being offered in a very informal atmosphere and where there is now a shop from which you can purchase your essential nomimono and tabemono and kitchenware.

## Scott of Japan

Scott Baron, Vice Chairman of the Society, has very recently returned from his first visit to Japan, where he spent ten weeks. Here are his initial reflections.

*What an amazing country!!! My first impression was of the awesome numbers of people moving around and in such an orderly manner. My second impression is that the cities are . . . unbelievably vast!!! I am told that Tokyo, with a population of some 34 million, is 4 times bigger than Greater London and that more people than the entire population of Wales pass through some of the Tokyo subway stations in one day . . . and there are hundreds of subway stations. I get the impression that many of these underground stations are each at least the size of Warrington town centre!!!*

*My knowledge of Japan has not been acquired as a result of 'empirical research' . . . but through my own 'impressions' gained by observation and experience. As a visual artist and as a person with an acute interest in people and their environments, I naturally view things from my own particular perspective.*

*Having enjoyed being in Japan for the past 10 weeks, I have observed many surprising things in this truly amazing country. I used Tokyo and Osaka as my bases . . . from which I was able to travel to a variety of interesting places within each of the two cities . . . together with others within a day's reach: e.g. Hamamatsu, Kamakura, Hakone . . . and Kyoto, Nara, Kobe, Himeji, Tsuruga . . . and many other smaller districts.*

*My visit had two main purposes.*

*Firstly, four of my pictures were in the East West Contemporary Art Exhibition 2005 at the La Deco Gallery in Shibuya, Tokyo in October . . . and in Tsuruga I gave a speech to the children and parents of the five schools that were exhibiting their art work together with some pictures from school children in Cumbria. I also was pleased to exhibit two of my own pictures. Some of my work can be seen on [www.ewacc.co.uk](http://www.ewacc.co.uk)*

*Secondly, and more importantly, I was there to develop the "Joining Hands Across the Water" project. This is a NPO cultural 'Arts for Healthcare' and 'Social Inclusion' project which links individuals and groups in the North West of England with similar people in Japan. The project is supported by many organisations including the Japan Embassy in London and has 'official' approval and recognition by the "2005 EU-Japan Peoples to People Exchanges". Anyone who wishes to know more about this project can email me directly at [jhatw@hotmail.com](mailto:jhatw@hotmail.com)*

*The people of Japan are also truly amazing. I have made many friends . . . and have been invited to return as a guest by numerous groups who would like me to work with emerging initiatives in local communities. I shall be visiting Japan again next year for several weeks at least.*

*In due course, I shall put together an unusual presentation of the 'surprises' that I experienced in Japan . . . and hope you can attend an occasion one evening to view the results.*

*Apparently, having made a significant impact in Japan, I was invited to be interviewed by the Japan Times. On 18<sup>th</sup> December an article was published that I think you can access via: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?fl20041218a1.htm>*

Scott Baron, as the winner of an international art competition, flew to Japan courtesy of Japan Airlines. JAL are a long-time supporter of the Japan Society North West and its predecessor, the UK Japan Society of the North West, for which we are very grateful for JAL's support. JAL can offer some great-value fares to Japan and this year is a good year to go (actually any year is a good year to visit Japan): EXPO 2005 in Aichi Prefecture (Nagoya area) opens on 25 March and runs through to 25 September. Some package tours to Japan will include entrance to the EXPO site: visit the JNTO website at [www.seejapan.co.uk/four](http://www.seejapan.co.uk/four)

## Events Programme

### “Ukiyo-e”

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

Date: Saturday January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005

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 artefacts 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 artefacts 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.

### “The Art of Japanese Gardens”

Venue: Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (behind Central Library)

Date: Wednesday February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005

Time: 1930

Duration: 1 – 1½ hours approximately

Members free. Non-Members £1.50 (pay on the day).

‘Calming’, ‘serene’, peaceful’, and ‘tranquil’, are often ways that people describe Japanese gardens. This talk by Graham Hardman, Chairman of the Japanese Garden Society, will attempt to explain why. Illustrated with many slides of gardens in Japan, he will show how Japanese gardens have developed into an art form, evolving over a thousand years. Comparisons with western style gardens will be discussed, raising questions about what a garden is, and how taking ideas from Japanese garden design can contribute to our own gardens and our experience of them.

## “Netsuke – the Art of Japanese ornament”

Venue: Liverpool Lending Library, William Brown St., Liverpool L1

Date: Wednesday March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005

Time: 1800

Duration: 2 hours

Members free. Non-Members £1.50 (pay on the day).

We're very fortunate to have one of the leading experts on Netsuke to talk to us in March and show a selection of slides as well as, hopefully, a selection of the real thing. For the uninitiated, Netsuke are the decoratively carved toggles of natural material used to suspend the inro from the obi (waist sash). Inro are usually small compartmentalised boxes used to carry herbal medicines, coins or a personal seal. Steve Smith was Curator of the Japanese collection at Liverpool Museum from 1989 and he'll also tell us a little about the new gallery of Japanese armoury and laquerware that we'll be visiting later in the year. Steve is also an expert on Japanese swords, being secretary of the northern branch of the Token Society, so the evening should be an exceptionally interesting one. Due to limited space please note the need to let us know if you're coming.

## Regional Events

Here are details of the Japan-related events happening in our region 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!

21 Jan	–	<b><i>Developing Business in Japan: seminar &amp; lunch.</i></b>	Thomas Ward Suite, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce. Organised by JETRO, London. 020 7470 4700
23 Jan	3 Feb	<b><i>Film Season: Japanese Film after Mr Pink.</i></b> Works by directors of the post Tarantino generation; aimed mainly at the young generation	Cornerhouse, Oxford St., Manchester. 0161 200 1500 <a href="http://www.cornerhouse.org">www.cornerhouse.org</a>
26 Jan	27 Jan	<b><i>Taiko to Achieve.</i></b> A celebration concert of Taiko music, dance drama & folk music performed by pupils of the Education Active Zone. Also Japanese art workshops with various performers & artists in residence.	Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent. Organised by The Achievement Zone.
26 Mar	27 Mar	<b><i>Aikido EU-Japan Festival.</i></b> Masterclasses & demonstrations.	Oval Sports Centre, Bebbington, Wirral. Organised by Komyokan Aikido Assn. <a href="http://www.aikido.co.uk">www.aikido.co.uk</a>
18 May	12 Jun	<b><i>HENRO 2005 with Young Britain &amp; Sumi-e.</i></b> Japanese ink painting by British children.	Organised by HENRO Committee & National Trust.
5 Jun	30 Aug	<b><i>Shogun – the Life of Lord Tokugawa Ieyasu.</i></b> Exhibition & lecture.	Royal Armouries, Leeds. 0113 220 1916