

# 英国北西部日英協會

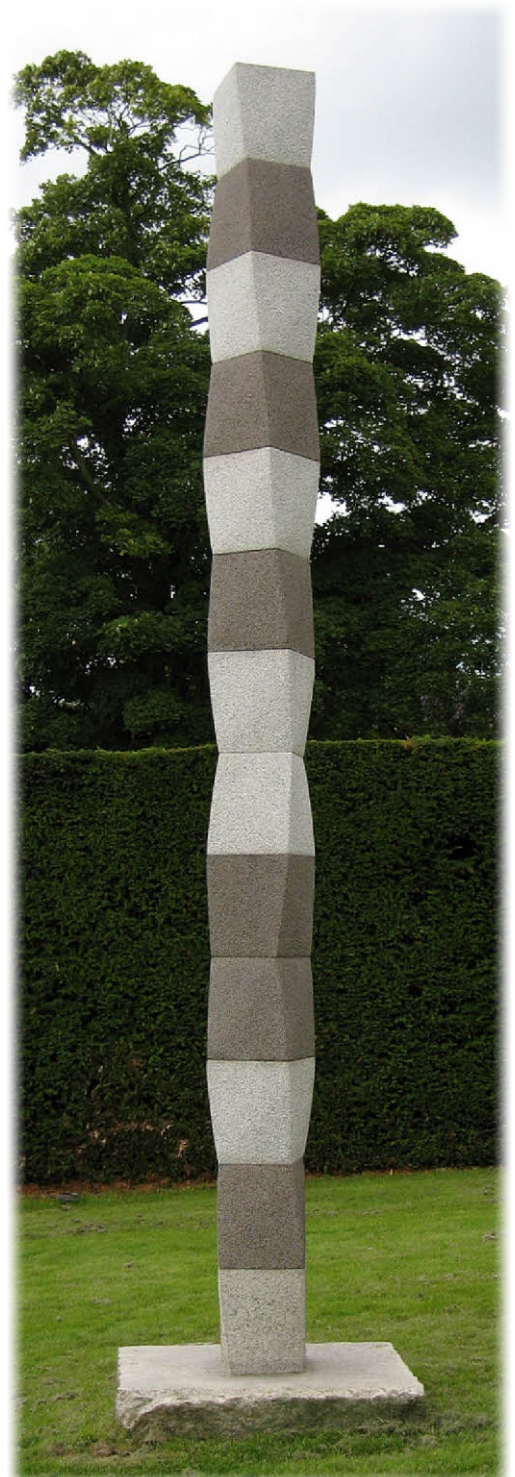
## Japan Society North West

### NEWSLETTER

## Isamu Noguchi at Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Does the sculpture on the right look familiar? Yes, it resembles the “signature” shape by the famous Isamu Noguchi’s Akari lights. No wonder, this is one of the sculptures by Isamu Noguchi himself, currently exhibited at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. This exhibition is one of the JAPAN-UK 150 events. Back in August, JSNW hosted a visit to Yorkshire Sculpture Park to enjoy the exhibition of Isamu Noguchi’s work in a natural setting, and also in the award-winning “Underground” Gallery (see the photo below). On a warm, beautiful Saturday in August, JSNW members had a great time walking in a beautiful landscape and formal gardens, dotted by sculptures by Moore and Hepworth, among others. The members were also pleasantly surprised by a wonderful shop in the Visitor Centre, which has an unexpectedly wide range of Japanese related goods, and by a restaurant with a fabulous view of the landscape.

This exhibition continues to 22nd Feb. 2009, so anyone who missed this event can still enjoy it! For more on Yorkshire Sculpture Park, see [www.ysp.co.uk](http://www.ysp.co.uk)



How was it?

聞かせて！日本の話

## Member's Experience in Japan

This section introduces each member's unique experience in Japan. Can you relate to the story, or was your experience in Japan totally different? We also hope these stories will help those who have never been to Japan to get some idea about what to expect once in Japan. Each one's experience is different, so let us know if you have your own story to tell! In this issue, Graham Worth talks about his encounter with Japan.



I joined JSNW because I was interested in meeting people within the North West who were like minded. I wanted to benefit from their experiences and also to share some of mine. I hoped that I could make a small contribution to what the committee were trying to achieve. An elongated thread to Japan but nevertheless a connection of sorts.

It's easy to find many, many books about Japan and about the Japanese. All sorts of things have been published, some good and some written, I believe, just to sell books. Is Japan a mystery? Are the Japanese so very different? I would advise anyone to go there and find out for themselves.

Looking back, it's difficult to know where my love



of Japan grew from. Certainly, during my school days, studying the Post-Impressionists and their love of Japanese woodcuts had something to do with it, I loved the simplicity of the line and boldness of the colours. Being attacked by some boys on my way home from school pushed me towards taking up judo when I was thirteen, a sport which for me ended when the club house, an old church in Bradford, Manchester closed for redevelopment. Someway, somehow, Japan was

always at the back of my mind or in my heart. Many years later, in the 1970's, as a working designer with a company in London which had a Japanese design contract I saw and met a small group of Japanese businessmen, they were canny and full of energy. I might have had the chance of going to Japan at that time but failed to take that chance, it felt too different. Instead I took up Aikido at the grand old age of thirty and I could write another essay about that but not this time!

Fast forward to more recent times. In 2000 the Japan Foundation, amongst others, promoted a huge cultural exchange event with the UK, 'Japan 2001'. As some of you may remember, many, many events were planned. By this time, I was working for Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and felt that we might do something towards this celebration of cultural exchange. To cut a long story short and 198 emails later, I finally helped put on a kimono exhibition at MMU in February 2002. The collection on display belonged to Sheila Cliffe, resident in Tokyo and avid kimono collector and on top of that a qualified kimono dresser. The exhibition later travelled to other venues in the North West and at some point Sheila invited me to Japan. I made my first trip in September 2003.

On arrival at Narita, my first reaction was that it felt like home! Honestly. It was hot, steamy and

so wonderfully different. Fortunately for me, although surrounded by many signs, written as pictures, there were also plenty of English translations. I had many maps and instructions from Sheila as to how to get to Ikebukuro where she would meet me. I took the bright orange 'Limousine Bus' out of Narita towards my destination, Metropolitan Hotel, Ikebukuro. I had watched the buses come and go whilst waiting for mine and was astounded at how quickly and efficiently everyone worked, they even bowed smartly as the bus pulled out. It was all so new and each observation of what was going on around me incredibly sharp. One thing I loved at the beginning was that the majority of citizens were about my size and height. I felt part of the general population straight away!

On this first visit, I was based in Tokyo but also visited Nara, Shizuoka, Kyoto and Nagoya with Sheila and her children. Being based in an hotel in Ikebukuro and sometimes staying with Sheila and her family in Hibarigaoka I took Tokyo as my first love and no other city will ever live up to its



vibrancy and noise. It's a great place which makes you feel alive and full of life.

As I had studied textile design at art school, Sheila introduced me to a yuzen dyer, Nasu san, based in Takadanobaba and a hand weaver, Suzuki san, based in Shizuoka. We also visited Sheila's bingata teacher, Sassa sensei who made me feel very welcome. It was a wonderful introduction to Japan and its handcrafts. It's very difficult to describe the full experience of getting under the skin of a culture I

had been longing to understand but I felt part of that culture within a short space of time. I was very, very fortunate. The people I met were generous with demonstrating their skills and shared many life experiences with me. It felt open and conducive to sharing the differences and similarities of our cultures. In Shizuoka I even stayed in a room once occupied by the a yakuza boss. Luckily, his spirit had long since gone.

Since that first trip, I have made numerous visits to Japan. Different seasons, different people and still it feels like home to me. The lasting impression I am left with, is that the population have a strong sense of togetherness but contrary to what you may read, the people on the street still believe in looking after the 'outsider or stranger' who looks as though he needs help. Many times I have been aided by a commuter who has taken time out to help me find a train. In a few instances, even bought the ticket for me! Tokyo, a fantastic city, rush, rush, but still time for the stranger? Yes, I hope it will always be so.

Editor's Note: The Japanese in the heading, 聞かせて！日本の話 means "Tell me! Stories of Japan."



## Past Event Report

### Japanese Garden Workshop at Calderstones, Aug. 31, 08

By Alice Hynes

On August 31st, 2008, the JSNW held a joint meeting with the Friends of Calderstones to hear about Japanese Gardens and to visit the landscape that had been built in Calderstones Park in the 1960s. The day was led by the world famous garden expert Professor Fukuhara who was again visiting the UK. Angela Davies once again acted as the interpreter for the Professor's UK tour and translated the presentation from the Professor. The JSNW was very pleased to have the use of the Educational Centre owned by the Liverpool Gardens department and the support of Mr Steve Perkins.

Mr Perkins had been an apprentice in the gardens and had worked on the building of garden over 40

involved in the work, and no proper plans were drawn apart from rough sketches drawn by Mr. Buckley. Despite that it had successfully captured much of the Japanese spirit and the Professor had offered to help in its restoration and redevelopment, if funds and maintenance arrangements could be found. He thought that perhaps a joint workshop with members of the JSNW, JGS and Friends of Harthill and Calderstones would be a good idea.

The Professor asked those of us taking part to walk round the Calderstones Garden and make notes on the aspects that we liked and those we found troublesome. He was looking for our reactions as westerners and as those familiar with some of concepts behind Japanese garden design. When we reconvened we shared our reactions – many found the garden too overgrown and cluttered, rocks which would have formed a key part of the design were now invisible and hidden by trees and bushes; people commented on the moss, the water features and the atmosphere.

There were delicious bento boxes for lunch provided by ETSU and an opportunity for discussion between members of the JSNW and Friends of Calderstones who also explained about a Japanese Garden at the Southport Flower Show. It was especially fascinating to see how Japanese design was affecting both the plants and form of ordinary English garden design. The Professor also highlighted how, conversely, the use of planting, flowers and colour from western garden design was affecting Japanese taste in gardens, especially where private gardens were concerned.

The Professor spoke to a number of slides detailing the history and forms of Japanese garden design. It was salutary to appreciate how very early Japanese garden design had commenced and how old a number of the gardens were. The Professor showed examples from the Asuka Periods (592–710)



years ago. He explained that the garden had been the inspiration of Mr. Harry Buckley the Head Gardener at the time who had been influenced by visiting Japan in the late 1960's and had read books about Japanese gardens. The design was a western interpretation from the various images that they had been able to collect. No Japanese person was

through to his own work in the present day. A key aspect was contemplation – such gardens had been created both for private use by the aristocracy – lords, shoguns and samurai leaders – and for Buddhist and Shinto monasteries. The Professor explained the styles of Japanese Gardens showing us a wide range of images including Pond and Stream, Dry Stone and Tea Gardens. There were Gardens of Immortality representing the quest for Elysium – they included the 3 ‘islands of immortality’: *Horai*, *Hojo* and *Eishu*. There was also Pure Land Sect Gardens, from the Nara period, which built with a pond as the central feature in temples and shrines symbolising Paradise and the dry stone garden (*karesansu*). Later there were Roji, or tea garden, normally with tea-house having strong connections to the Samurai period and Zen ideals.

The concept of *Miekakure*, revealing and concealing, is a major aspect of many Japanese Garden designs. There are also occasions where the landscape outside the garden is used – this called a borrowed view blending the garden into the larger

environment. Sometimes the garden is design to be reflection in miniature of large landscape with a rock as a mountain or a pond as an inland sea.



At the end of the event we looked at a number of characteristic images provided by a pupil of the Professor and we wrote about our feeling for the particular images and situations – moon, autumn trees, reflections in the water. It would be interesting to compare western and Japanese reactions to these garden and natural scenes. All in all it was a most stimulating and fascinating afternoon.

## Tribute to Retiring Committee Members: Many Thanks!!



**Cathy Peel**

Cathy Peel was a founder committee member of the Japan Society North West, and has worked tirelessly to help promote Japanese culture in the area. She has been an inspiration to all the members of the committee, leading the way in many of the events organised by the Society. She will be well remembered not only for ability to achieve the impossible when we thought all was lost, as when she

moved mountains to get the Japanese flag hoisted over the Town Hall in Manchester on Japan Day 2006, when that had been overlooked in the general hubbub of organising the day. In addition we all remember her sterling contributions running the JSNW stand on the 3 Japan Days the society has held over the past few years. So from all of us Cathy, we want to say a very big thank you and to tell you that we will miss you very much, but

we wish you and your husband, John, good health and look forward to seeing you at some of the future events.

Angela Davies

Joe Connell joined the committee 2 years ago and since then has been active both with mind and body in encouraging the society and contributing to its programme of events. He carried out the first ‘recce’ of the Student Union in Liverpool where we eventually held Japan Day and worked hard not only on the JSNW stall but also, behind the scenes, in collecting fees from our various stall holders. Perhaps Joe worked rather too hard over JD because he’s decided that, now it’s over, it’s time to have a break. Thank you Joe for all you have done for the Society.



**Joe Connell**

David Willis

Well, as you see, now we have vacancies for committee member positions. Would you be interested in making more direct contributions to JSNW? If so, why don’t you get involved! You might be surprised how much you enjoy it! Please contact JSNW Secretary at [rob@jsnw.org.uk](mailto:rob@jsnw.org.uk)

Tell me more!

もっと知りたい!

## Japan Day In-Depth

In this new series, "Japan Day In-Depth," we will introduce exhibitors and demonstrators who participated in Japan Day, July 2008. We hope to provide more information about them in case you missed talking to them, or wanted to know more about them. In this issue, one of the demonstrators, Andrew Baird from Lancashire Aikikai, will tell you more about Aikido and his Aikikai.

When you say to someone you practise karate, or judo the western mind can create a mental image of what these sports are – when you say you practise Aikido it doesn't conjure any mental picture. The nearest Aikido you can get is that Steven Segal has featured it in his films but not all have seen these. In case you are curious, we showcase 3 clips on our association website:

[www.lancashireaikikai.org](http://www.lancashireaikikai.org).

These illustrate only its physical form but in fact aikido very much harnesses one's mental side as well. Aikido offers something for everyone. It is non-competitive in its traditional form and is practised by young and old – it's about improving skill levels and encourages the peaceful resolution of conflict as a non-aggressive martial art. The physical and mental benefits of studying Aikido are tremendous.

Aikido translates as the way of harmony and spirit. However, this still doesn't satisfactorily explain the core of what it is. As an insight let's look at two aspects, firstly the more visible, physical side of Aikido and then the invisible mental / spiritual side.

The western equivalent of Aikido is sidestepping out of the way of an attack and causing the attacker to trip over. The Aikido way is not to be there when an attack is completed and then be sophisticated in how you control and manage the attacker.

Techniques practised require very little strength to make them effective as one gains experience and



Andrew Baird in Action

skills. Aikido seeks to control an opponent by exploiting their weaknesses through movement and technique, blending with the attack. It is this blending that means you are not meeting force with force as it is based on circular / spherical movements rather than direct linear movements. This is a very noticeable characteristic when you watch Aikido. In essence Aikido is turning an opponents' own power against themselves without inflicting undue harm.

The mental side of Aikido is much harder to describe. Starting Aikido improves mental focus from Day 1 through you making your body copying moves. But we seek to harness the power of Ki (spirit / essence) also. When we practise we try to send forth ki so that universal ki can enter our bodies. It is said if the flow of ki slows or stops –



new ki can't enter. Then the flow is inhibited reducing ones life power. The more it flows, the converse is true, the more positive one gets and this feeds into not just your Aikido but everyday life.

In fact, as with most activities, you want to harness both the mind and body – Aikido helps to do this through co-ordination in a relaxed way with the flow of Ki enabling us to defend ourselves in a powerful and efficient way with minimum exertion. Breathing exercises are used to develop relaxation and calmness.

Aikido allows its practitioners to live in peace and harmony with the world around us remaining flexible, balanced and firmly grounded. In fact there are some Management textbooks that base themselves on extending the Aikido approach to the workplace.

The founder, O'Sensei, Morihei Ueshiba, during the middle of the last century, developed Aikido as



synthesis of other Japanese fighting martial arts but with an emphasis of harmony. Lancashire Aikikai was established in the mid 1960's and now consists of 10 clubs in the North West and one in Milton Keynes. The Aikikai is member of the national governing body, which is recognised by Sports England. Over the years more and more Sensei's have visited Britain mainly from Japan, Europe and America and we have taken every opportunity to study Aikido practices. In this way

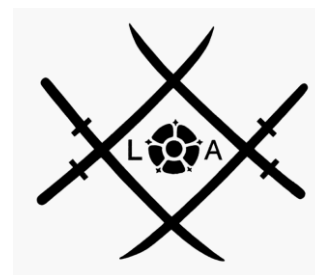
our Aikido continues to grow and evolve.

In Aikido you never stop learning and are continually discovering new nuances and subtleties during practice sessions. In one sense that's an attraction in so far as you don't get bored but has its down side to the western mindset of achieving something easily. Lancashire Aikikai takes children from 8 years of age and there is no upper age limit. All practise at own pace, ability and level but the tendency is to find it more demanding mentally then physically.

Don't be put off by seeing people rolling out of techniques. Not all the techniques require this and simply you practise to improve your skills at the level and ability you are. We even had new starters aged over 70!

Practicing Aikido can benefit everyone, male or female, young or old by improving their health and fitness. From the very start beginners and advanced students can practice and learn together. Its full and natural body movement has aerobic benefits for all. When practiced regularly it will assist in developing a fitter, suppler and stronger body with improved flexibility, reflexes and reaction and gives practitioners greater confidence and positive attitude to life. The formal and more spiritual aspect of Aikido appeals to some, the physical side to others.

More details and where you can find our clubs are available on our website [www.lancashireaikikai.org](http://www.lancashireaikikai.org) and if we haven't a club near you – you can look up others on the governing body website [www.bab.org.uk](http://www.bab.org.uk)



Editor's note: もっと知りたい! means "I want to know more!"

## Future Events



### Talk about Kimono by Sheila Cliffe

Saturday 21 February 2009  
3 pm to 5 pm

Qualified kimono dresser Sheila Cliffe will be giving an illustrated talk on various kinds of patterning and dyeing for Japanese kimono. This will be followed by a demonstration of kimono dressing and a small exhibition of her kimono collection. She will be offering some of her kimonos for sale.

Cost: free to JSNW members, £5 to non-members.

Venue: Cavendish Lecture Theatre, Cavendish South Building, Cavendish Street, Manchester M15 6BG



(All Saints Campus of Manchester Metropolitan University)

### Taiko Drumming Workshop with Tantara Taiko

Saturday 28th March 2009

11:00 am to 5:00 pm

A workshop run by John Bolwell, leader of the Taiko drumming group "Tantara Taiko". Participants will use a mixture of authentic Japanese Taiko drums and homespun practice drums, but all will have the chance to play authentic Japanese Taiko drums

which are of the Nagado, Okedo, Hirodo and Shime designs.

The cost to JSNW members will be £30 per person. Buffet lunch and tea and coffee are included in the price.

Venue: Aquarius Yoga Centre, Moss Mill, Woodbine

# TANTARA

## What?! JSNW Has Set Up a Library!!!

Several members have donated books for us to set up a JSNW library (at the moment, it is a small collection). We are going to try it for a year, to see if it's practical, and members are invited to check the list of material on our website. There it also gives the procedure for borrowing and returning the

books. It may be that you are also willing to make a donation - again guidance is on the website. For members without access to a computer, write to membership secretary, David Willis, and we'll send you details by post.

Good reading!

### Editor's Comment

Yuko Howes

編集後記

The year 2008, which was marked by a very successful Japan Day, is coming to an end. I hope this year has been a very meaningful year for everyone. It is exciting to think what new things are going to unfold in the coming year. JSNW hopes to contribute to make your new year a colourful one. Merry Christmas, and very best wishes for a new year to all our members!

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