

英国北西部日英協會

Japan Society North West

NEWSLETTER

Taiko Drumming a Big Hit!

Our first Taiko Drumming Workshops were held for two days, on Saturday, 21st and Sunday, 22nd of March. Initially planned for only one day, the workshops needed to be expanded to cover the enthusiastic response from members. Liz Walter of Tamashii Daiko from London guided the participants into the exciting world of Taiko drumming. The workshop lasted 6 hours, from 10:30 to 4:30, with one hour lunch break. Many participants didn't realize until the following day how hard they worked, waking up with sore arms and legs! (See the photos below and the next page to check out how it was.) Due to popular demand, JSNW is planning to hold another Taiko drumming workshop next March (date to be determined), so please keep checking our website in case you missed this one.



Participants concentrate on drumming (above). "Yoroshiku onegai shimasu!" Workshop starts with learning the proper greeting (below left). "Let's hear it," Liz Walter checks participants' drumming rhythm (below right).





"All together now!"



Practicing the big finish. "Raise your hand if you've had enough!"

Tell me more!

もっと知りたい!

Japan Day In-Depth

As some might remember, Jane Smith of Nuido exhibited her work of Japanese embroidery at last years' Japan Day. Did you manage to attend her event on Japanese embroidery in April? In case you missed it, not to despair; here, she describes with some of her work what traditional Japanese embroidery (shishu) is, and what it takes to learn it.



I have always been interested in Japan and all things Japanese even though I knew little or nothing about the country or its art. It was more of a fascination about something exotic and unknown, I think. In 1990 when I saw an ad for an introductory course on traditional Japanese embroidery, I booked myself in and off I went to Exeter for a week of intensive stitching. In that week my fate (and that of my bank balance!) was set. The designs, the colours, the shine of the silk, the enthusiasm and work of two students from America who had brought examples of their stitching with them, all spoke to me in a way that no other craft had ever done.

Traditional Japanese embroidery is not cheap, in money or time. It takes many hours, years even, of practice to perfect its techniques. Working with the finest quality silk and metallic threads and almost always

on a silk ground adds to the cost. However, it did not stop me from wanting to learn more. Five years ago, I was finally able to start my studies under the auspices of Japanese Embroidery UK and since then, this hobby has gradually grown into a passion.

History of Japanese Embroidery (Nihon no Shishu)

Nihon no Shishu has a 1600 year history, travelling to Japan from China in the form of embroidered Buddhist

textiles. Over time it travelled to the Japanese court and then out into the wider community, although always only available to the richest as only they could afford such costly work.

Little known outside Japan until about 1986, and now

refined and perfected far beyond its origins, traditional Japanese embroidery is a unique reflection of Japanese culture. Drawing from earlier periods of history, appropriate designs and colours are selected according to the age of the wearer, the season of use, or to symbolize traditional themes, legends and classical Japanese literature.

The decline in wearing of kimono and in the use of

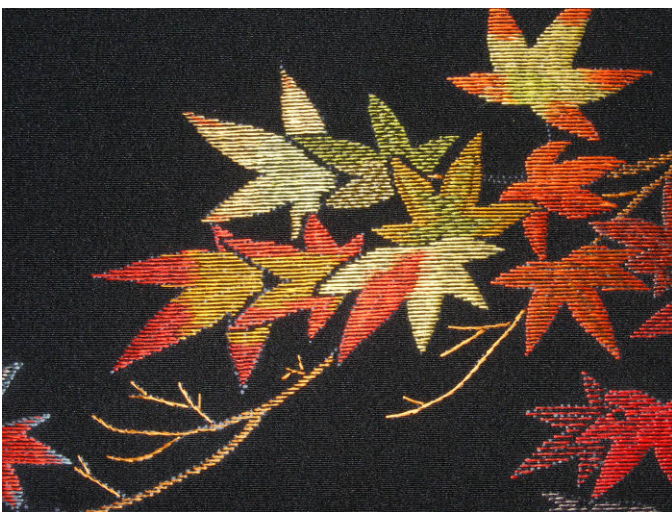
other traditional textiles gradually caused the number of schools of embroidery to decline. The late Master Iwao Saito founded the Kurenai-kai school of embroidery with the intention to help preserve his art, but he realised that the small number of apprentices he was attracting would not be enough, and that he would have to do something more. Master Saito opened up the classroom and workshop of Kurenai-kai to outside students and took traditional Japanese embroidery out into



the community. Kurenai-kai published a number of books on traditional Japanese embroidery and in 1983 they published the first book in English on the subject.

In the late 1980s professional embroiderers from Kurenai-kai travelled to the United States to exhibit their work, one of the first times traditional Japanese embroidery was seen outside Japan. Such was the interest and fascination that in 1991 the Japanese Embroidery Center (JEC), Atlanta, was opened under the auspices of the current Master, Master Tamura, and the rest, as they say, is history. Classes continue in Atlanta and Kurenai-kai and now take place in the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. (For more details of the history, please check the book by Master Tamura, *Techniques of Japanese Embroidery*, 1998, and www.japaneseembroidery.com)

Learning the Techniques and Beyond



As with many things Japanese the learning process is very structured. Realising that outside students could not be expected to learn in the same way as full time apprentices Master Saito designed 10 levels or 'phase' pieces which gradually take the student through all 46 techniques of traditional Japanese embroidery. Each piece introduces new techniques and each subsequent phase allows the student to practice techniques al-



ready learnt and introduce a few more.

The techniques of traditional Japanese embroidery include many that would be recognised by students of English embroidery, but some are unique. For example, phase 8 introduces the student to "weft valley layer" or as it is more affectionately known, "fuzzy effect", which is one of the unique techniques. This technique is created by laying a long stitch in the valley of the weave of the fabric. It is then held down with either a diagonal or vertical stitch, depending on the effect required. Holding the stitches diagonally will make them fuller

while vertically held stitches will recede into the background (see the photo below left). On the other hand, "realistic effect" would be recognised by students of other types of embroidery as "long-and-short" stitch (see the photo below center).

About three years ago I was lucky enough to travel to Japan for a holiday. It was a wonderful experience and it was great to see in reality all the motifs which appear in our stitching. I hope to go back one day to visit more museums and art galleries, and to visit some of the craftspeople working to keep textile arts alive in modern Japan.

In the meantime I and a fellow student, now qualified as a teacher, are working to spread the word of Nuido (the way of embroidery) in the North West. We have already run one weekend introductory course which went down very well and we have another one booked in for next April. If anyone would like details, please contact me on jane@nuido.org.uk, or check out www.nuido.blogspot.com, or

www.japaneseembroideryuk.com, or for a gallery of images visit

www.nuido.org.uk. And if anyone is wondering how many hours of stitching I'm talking about, this (the photo above centre) is a picture of my phase 9 piece Treasure Ship - 220 hours and counting!!

All the embroidery designs are copyright of JEC.



How was it?

聞かせて！日本の話

Member's Experience in Japan

In this issue, Marge Quinn will share with us a wonderful memory of her first trip to Kyoto, Japan. She also introduces the traditional Japanese craft, "kumihimo (braiding)", with some of her wonderful work. Kumihimo is used most commonly now for tying Obi sashes on kimono. Let's find out how she enjoyed her stay in Japan.

When an opportunity to go to Japan came by way of the Braid Society (www.braidsociety.com) in 2007, I was delighted to be able to go. I went along with my husband on a three-week visit. There was to be a conference on Braiding for a week in Kyoto, and the rest of the time, 2 weeks, was for sight-seeing. I have been a member of the Society for many years and tried my hand at various braiding techniques of making "narrow wares". I was particularly interested in Kumihimo (Japanese Braiding), having done basic work on the various pieces of Japanese braiding equipment, for example, the Marudai, Takadai, and Karakumidai. This was an ideal opportunity to learn more from the best tutors. The conference was organised by Shinsako Tada, the principal of the Kyoto college of Technology, and his wife, Makiko Tada, who is a world expert on Kumihimo, and have written many books on the subject. She teaches world wide and frequently visits the U.K., The Braid Society and others.

We made our own travel and accommodation arrangements, and left Manchester on Sept. 6th 2007. We had a week to explore before the conference, a week's Conference, and another week to explore. Stopping off at Dubai we travelled on to Kansai airport in Osaka. After 19 hours of travel, we stayed at the airport hotel the first night. A very comfortable hotel, the highlight of which was a heated toilet seat. Next day we travelled on to Kyoto by train, a very efficient rail system, with orderly queues for boarding, which don't interfere with those alighting. We appeared to travel through built-up areas most of the journey, with compact housing, rows of neat washing lines, and any open ground was growing, I presumed, rice.

On our arrival in Kyoto, we boarded a Taxi, which had white lace covers over

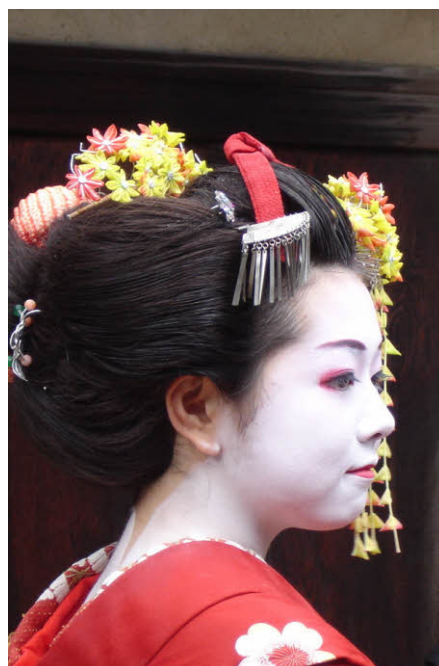
the seat and whose driver was wearing white gloves, and who didn't appear to know where the Holiday Inn was until he realised we meant the HoRiday Inn. This was a very comfortable hotel with clean towels, yukata, slippers and bedding every day, and yes a heated toilet seat and bathroom mirror.

We began by checking out the bus services, and found them to be very efficient. After buying a day's pass at the hotel with a map of bus numbers and routes, it was easy to plan the day. All

stops were in English on the map and displayed at the front of the bus, so you knew exactly where you were. We thought it better than the metro; you could get closer to your destination, and see the sights as you travel, and it was cheaper, approx £2 per day. The first visit was to the Gion district, (the old quarter), with narrow streets, quaint buildings, fabulous temples and shrines, and some lovely roadside cafes, with Geisha's wandering about, who loved having their photos taken. We suspected they were tourists, as you could be made-up and dressed, to wander the streets to have pictures taken by any other tourists (for a fee). Autumn was just beginning

so the colours in the trees were breathtaking, and the temperature was very mild. After this, a wander down Terramachi was just the opposite, which I'm sure must be the longest shopping arcade in the world, with bustling avenues of shoppers buying anything from coffee to socks with toes like gloves (incidentally, they are very comfortable and hygienic).

There are lots of Museums in Kyoto, exhibiting exquisite pottery, paintings, Samurai armour, fabrics and Kimono. I was particularly interested in the textiles and crafts, and I wasn't disappointed. A visit to a Shibori (Japanese tie-dyeing) workshop was



particularly interesting where the owner himself took us round. His grandfather started the business and he was proud to carry it on. The tie-dyeing technique is fascinating and takes two years to produce a kimono. A museum of crafts was particularly well laid out showing videos of Japanese crafts from fan-making to doll-making.

A visit to the Palace was denied, as we arrived to tour with passport in hand (a requirement) only to find it closed because it was a national holiday. The railway station was particularly interesting with a very large shopping complex on several floors, and it took 9 escalators to reach the bamboo garden on the rooftop.



There are obviously fantastic views from there of Kyoto. There was a handicraft centre where you could have a go at any of the crafts, including fan-making, Jewellery making, etc. I did some block printing, which

I was very pleased with (visit www.amitacorp.co.jp for more information on the handicraft centre, and <http://Shibori.jp> for the Museum of Shibori; tie dyeing).

Amazingly there were hundreds of bicycles. I would imagine everyone owns a bike. They are everywhere, and they ride on the pavements so be-aware. There was an interesting memorial of Izumo no Okuni at the North-east corner of Shijo-Oohashi, who is said to be the founder of Kabuki. She gave a performance in men's costume which was eventually banned, as it was thought to be too corrupting. The statue commemorates the 400 anniversary of this performance. Incidentally men now dress as women in Kabuki!

The conference week was very exciting and full. The conference was attended by approximately 400 delegates from all over the world, with several from the U.K. After a wine reception on registration night, with a bag

of "goodies," each day began with a lecture by well-known and talented braiders, followed by workshops on various techniques (I worked on the *karakumidai*), with a break for lunch in the college canteen. There were two evening trips to textile museums and work studios, and a day outing to Iga City to see braids being made by hand and machine. There was an evening dinner in the 300-year-old Azekura restaurant, with a mouthwatering 5-course menu, at the end of which everyone was invited to join



together in Manchester in August 2012 for the next conference.

So began another week of sightseeing, including a visit to the botanical gardens, with every variety of Bamboo, and a very substantial collection of Bonsai trees, set in a beautiful park. A visit to the Toji temple was a delight, and a bonus of a monthly flea market with hundreds of stalls. I bought a fabulous haori jacket in shibori dyeing which I have since found out to be quite valuable.

We had intended to go on other outings to Hiroshima etc., but there was so much to see in Kyoto we didn't find time. Still I suppose it is an excuse to return. After a final shopping spree, it was time to say Sayonara. We found Japan to be very beautiful and noticeably clean, with



spectacular buildings and scenery, and the Japanese were very friendly and helpful. I hope that I can visit there again. Sayonara & Arigato.

Left page above: Marge working on Kumihimo.
 Left page below: Is she a real one?
 Top: A scene at the conference.
 Middle: A statue of Izumo no Okuni.
 Bottom: A woman works on Kumihimo at a manufacturer in Iga City

JSNW Welcomes New Corporate Member: Sushi Craft by Taka

As many of you might know, without Taka's food, our annual Bonenkai would not have been that much fun. As his catering business, Suchi Craft, has grown, he has decided to become a corporate member. Below, he tells us how he has come to where he is now. (Visit his website at www.sushi-craft.com)

Thanks to the introduction of sushi conveyors to Japan in the late 1950s, these days Japanese people enjoy eating sushi in restaurants more often, but when I was a child (in the 70s), sushi was a special treat (and I personally still think it is). When we ate at a sushi restaurant, it was a big occasion. When my father came home from a sushi restaurant with a souvenir, my brothers and I screamed our heads off in delight. A friend of mine whose father was a sushi chef sometimes had sushi in his lunch box at school. I was very jealous of him, wondering why my father was not a sushi chef.



Before I came to England, I was an English teacher for 8 years in Japan and a Japanese teacher for 2 years in Australia. A year after I came to England, I switched careers and became a chef. I had been interested in cooking all my life and, when my wife got pregnant with our son, it fitted in better for me to work at night and babysit our one-year-old daughter during the day while she did translation work from home. This is what prompted me to change my career, but I don't deny that to some extent my experience of sushi as a child influenced my decision. Somewhere in the back of mind I probably wanted to make my kids' friends jealous at school lunch time some day in the future.

My enthusiasm for cooking came from my mother and grandmother who always cooked nice meals for their family at home. My "gourmet" father also helped me develop my appreciation of food by taking me to many great restaurants. I also owe my cooking skills to my English wife, simply because if I don't cook I can't eat proper Japanese food at home. The first meal she ever cooked for me, while still in Japan, was curry with mochi-rice!!!!!! I was desperate to learn to cook. (Curry tasted fabulous, though!)

A year after I started my new career I launched my own catering business. I cooked dinner for Japanese businessmen on transfer to the North West without their families. As I was more or less their sole source of proper food, I tried to ensure they had a balanced diet. This helped me learn to cook a wide range of Japanese

food. Though I started my chef career late and my experience is not so long, I have been very lucky to work with many good chefs at different places. I was involved in setting up a conveyor sushi restaurant and an Italian-Japanese fusion restaurant in Italy. I was also involved in setting up Chino-Latino restaurant of Park Plaza Hotel in Nottingham, working with multi-nationality chefs. I had a great opportunity of consulting Japanese ready-made food for UK major supermarkets, working with Geest culinary academy in Peterborough. I have learned lots of great food and catering business methods from working for UK largest kosher catering company. During 5 years when I was a contractor with Toyota Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd, I was offered many great opportunities of cooking for Japanese VIP's and also training local chefs at Toyota's canteen.

Now that the renovation of our commercial kitchen in Widnes is complete, we have re-launched our catering business. Our aim is to make Japanese food more accessible and more affordable. We adopted the catering business model as opposed to opening a restaurant because this allows us to provide Japanese food at a reasonable price, without compromising on quality. We operate virtually stock-free, buying in just the right amount of fresh ingredients to cater for the orders received and delivering top quality Japanese food without the elitist price tag. As our name (SUSHI CRAFT) suggests, we are proud of the craft of sushi-making and like any craftsmen would like to pass on our skills to others. Alongside our catering service, we run a sushi school, offering lessons either at our fully-equipped commercial kitchen or on a mobile-basis, visiting customers in their homes. Our lessons take you through the art of sushi-making step-by-step and are ideal for sushi enthusiasts or for anyone interested in cooking something different for family and friends.



AGM 2009

The Society's AGM took place on 16th May. Ten nominations were received for Committee membership, and the meeting unanimously elected all ten. The new Committee comprises:

Angela Davies (Chairman), Alice Hynes (Vice-Chairman), Nigel Cordon (Event Coordinator), Robert Bierman (Secretary), Kevin Howes (Treasurer), Yuko Howes (Newsletter Editor), Tim Evans, Jane Smith, Sandra McFarlane (Membership Secretary), and Graham Worth (Publicity).



It was also time to say good-bye to a long-serving committee member, David Willis. David was one of the founding members of JSNW, and has played a leading role in the Society. He served for three years as Treasurer, and for the last two years, as Membership Secretary. He also played a vital role in the organization of Japan Day 2008. He always devoted his time selflessly to work for the Society. Thank you, David, we were so lucky to have you.



A New Netsuke Collection at World Liverpool Museum



World Museum Liverpool recently acquired a collection of intricately-carved Japanese "netsuke" (kimono sash toggles), collected by a Swedish collector Jonas Goro Gadelius (1926 - 2003), and a part of the collection has been on display from January, 2009 (for more information, see

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mediacentre/displayrelease.aspx?id=758>). JSNW

was invited to be present at the official opening ceremony of this collection on 2nd of June. Two of our Committee members attended and enjoyed the occasion.

JSNW has established a good relationship with World Museum Liverpool, and they will be happy to take us to their "backroom store" to show us the collections that are usually tucked away and not on public display. We are planning to hold this event early next year, so please keep checking our website.

The photo: One of the Netsuke collection, Seioho Sennin, made of Ivory. Carved by Masatoshi, the brilliant 20th century carver, in 1952. Courtesy of Liverpool Museum.

Future Events (visit our website for details)

A Japanese Conversation Evening Hosted by Angela Davies

Wednesday, 19th August 2009, 7 to 9 pm, at Etsu restaurant in Liverpool.

Angela Davies, a very experienced instructor of Japanese, will host an evening of Japanese conversation, over delicious food at Etsu restaurant. Please mark your calendar now!

Pruning Trees the Japanese Way

Saturday, 12th September 2009, at Calderstones Park in Liverpool

Another visit by Professor Masao Fukuhara, for a hands-on workshop where you will have a chance to prune trees.



A JSNW Social and Japanese Conversation Evening in Manchester

Tuesday, 22nd September 2009, 7 to 9 pm at Sapporo Teppanyaki restaurant in Manchester.

Let's have a drink, enjoy food, and meet someone new. For those who'd like to speak in Japanese, a Japanese host will be there for you to make it a conversation evening. Everyone welcome!

Bonsai Demonstration

Sunday, 11th October 2009, at Padgate Community Centre.

A talk by Ian Warhurst of Wirral Bonsai covering the history, styles, sizes, basic care and culture of bonsai trees. Ian will be bringing a number of examples of bonsai with him.

Editor's Comment

Yuko Howes

編集後記

I hope you are enjoying the long summer days. This Newsletter brings to you more fascinating stories about how our members' interest toward Japan and its culture evolved. What is YOUR story? I hope you can share it with us one day. Photos: Kevin Howes, Nigel Cordon, Jane Smith, Marge Quinn.

Focus on Members

Once again, it's time to focus on members. The questions asked are the same as before: 1. How long have you been a member? 2. Why or how did you become a member? 3. Any request to the society for future events? Each time, members reveal a fascinating story behind their interest in Japan.



Judy Kendall

1. I was invited to play the Koto at Bonenkai in 2007, and I had a good time then, so it convinced me to become a member. 2. I used to live in Japan, and when I first came back to England I didn't want to do Japanese things, but back several years now, and I did enjoy some events... It's just nice now and then to take my turns to things Japanese. 3. Can we have more Taiko workshops and form a Taiko drumming group, please? I would like to join.

Jenny and Robin Legge

1. Four months. 2. I've been to Japan for two very brief holidays, and we found out about Japan Society from other friend in the embroidery group. We were always very interested in Japan, and the Japanese way of life, and so on. 3. Those things planned all look interesting to me. I am interested in Japanese gardens. I'm looking forward to whatever comes up anyway.



Ian Munro with his grandson, Thomas

1. I was one of the original members. From absolutely beginning...but don't remember how many years ago that was. 2. At the University of Manchester and UMIST, there were many activities back then, at the Japan Center on Oxford Street. Many people were interested in Japanese restaurants and doing things, and gradually the society evolved from that. David Willis was the key guy, and a few of us academics, who had the experience of living in Japan. In my case, it was more from sentimental reasons. I lived in Japan in 1962 for 6 to 9 months, then one year and a half in 1986. Then I went back to live there for 3 years from 1997, but my health deteriorated so I had to return to the UK. 3. I haven't been to many events...Social events like eating will be good, where people can make some conversations.

Ann and Peter Clayton

1. We became a member last year after Japan Day in Liverpool. 2. We have a son who lives in Kyoto, married to a Japanese girl, who teaches English. They've been married about ten years now. We've been out to visit, and I think I've been three times. That's why we became a member, to find out more about Japan, the way of life, culture, and so on. 3. I'm interested, but know very little about Manga. Could anybody illustrate and explain? There's a program on Sky Channel, that comes from Tokyo and in English. They report what's cool in Japan, and it's very interesting. I enjoy it. They mention Manga, and there's a school in Tokyo that teaches people how to draw Manga. Just explain why Japanese are so fond of Manga.



Scott Baron

1. I was one of the founders of the Society. 2. I was originally a member of the former organization, called UK Japan Society North West. This is a limited company, which was set up largely to satisfy the needs of corporate members and companies in the North West. After the society disintegrated, about 8 of us from the old society created a new Society, and just dropped UK and called Japan Society North West. Started out with about 8 people, everybody was committee members. We created a new constitution, membership rule, and so on.



Anna Johnson (photo declined)

1. Three months. 2. I have been interested in Japanese things since I was a very little girl, since my grandmother was employed by a family who were going out to Japan to work in developing steel industry, giving advice from South Wales. My grandmother was about to go there, when my grandfather proposed, so she got married instead. So she didn't go. I suspect she regretted it. So she told me a lot of stories of Japan when I was a little girl. I didn't join the Society till recently, because I didn't know about the society, but sadly my husband died at the end of last year, and I have been exploring lots of things I would see as my interest rather than things you would do together. Japan was one of the things of my interest; I read quite a bit about it, I enjoy Japanese arts. And the society seemed a nice place for me to join. 3. Nothing special, as I'm fascinated by everything. My attendance depends to a certain extent on weather, because it is hard to come out in the middle of cold winter, but I am fascinated by everything.