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 81

JULY - AUGUST 1974

EDITOR - TONY CHAPMAN

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 5th August, 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 yds down on the left hand side.

FOLLOWING MEETING

Monday, 2nd September at Princess Louise. 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECTS:

AUGUST — Armour by John Anderson (Don't miss this one)

SEPTEMBER — A.G.M. - Do try to make this one - it is usually the most poorly attended meeting of the year and yet one of the most important. You decided on your new committee.

NORTHERN BRANCH

Forthcoming meetings:

Tuesday, 10th September 7.30 p.m. at the Manchester Club

"Sword Evening". All members are requested to bring two swords, their best and their worst (or their favourite and their least liked).

Tuesday, 12th November 7.30 p.m. at the Manchester Club

Annual General Meeting. Items for the Agenda to be handed to the Branch Secretary as soon as possible.

JUNE MEETING

The meeting was commenced with the pre-arranged 20 minute Auction. This was concluded in about 2 minutes, as only one sword was involved. Sidney Divers brought to the members' notice that the majority of those who had voted for the auction at the previous meeting, were not present at this one. The continuation

of auctions at every meeting could only result in the lots being less and less at each auction - culminating in the inevitable no lot auction, that we only missed by one tonight. It was decided by the committee some time ago and discussed at meetings that we should settle for possibly 1 or 2 a year and make those worthwhile.

Apologies were made for the lateness of the programme - one can easily get carried away and not know where to stop. A continuation of the Japanese visit will be in the next programme.

Mr. Ings was welcomed again (our member from Customs and Excise) for those who missed the last meeting.

The blades that had been sent to both Harding and Saiyama have arrived back in this country and all concerned will be notified in a week or so by our blade dept. head, Dave Parker.

Sid has been in touch with Bon Dale who has taken slides of the Los Angeles Shinsa and will be prepared to show these at a later date. The Shinsa in the United States was led by Dr. Kashima of Veno Museum - those who went on the trip will not forget our visit to him and the wonderful swords he generously showed us.

POLISHER

Communications have been received from Japan and also sent to Japan.- unfortunately the letters crossed. Mr. Usui, the gentleman who is representing the polisher, has asked literally what was said at the last meeting. As well as the previously mentioned polisher there is also the possibility of a second man, namely Mr. Kurokawa,who is 29 years old and has had 15 years experience polishing swords. (They do start very young). Apparently his father was a very famous sword polisher and he is a member of the Token Makubutsukan. As well as polishing he can hold Kantai Kai (Shinsa) for the members. So now there appears to be the chance of two polishers.

We still require information from Japan so that we can accurately assess the costs.

Sid has guaranteed the polisher a minimum of 100 swords - this is absolutely necessary. Far few people realise how many swords are in Britain. Those who come and see for themselves always express surprise at the number of swords they see (and no doubt at the state as well).

It was agreed at the meeting that with regard to the polishing, those members who support the meetings should have first whack. Seems reasonable enough - but then there are more

who should have first whack if all arguments are listened to. Those who have swords with Dave Parker have been waiting possibly 3 years in the queue. Then there are others who, finding how long the queue was, decided not to swell the backlog even further. So in a sense they too have waited.

The problem is to be fair and to be seen to be fair. No doubt the problem will resolve itself - first let's get a polisher over before we squabble over him and who knows, he may decide what he is going to polish.

Should two polishers come, one will come for 6 months followed by the other. Tony Chapman has offered to look after this polisher and put him up at his house etc.

Regarding the stones. It has been suggested that they bring the stones and we would buy them when they leave, so as to avoid having to carry them back when they leave.

We may also be able to lay on a visit to see the polisher at work for those who missed it in Japan - Polisher willing.

Some members queried the possibility of the polisher coming to the meeting and showing how it's done. This is not practicable - the stones are very heavy, it requires considerable water plus special lighting and he would also have to bring possibly 6 swords in various stages of polish. A talk may well be more to the mark.

A member queried if he could ask for Sashi Komi or Kesho polish - yes of course he could, but the Sashi Komi will take much longer and it does not look good on a Suguma blade and naturally it would cost more. In fact the owner should explain to the polisher just what he does want, for he should have a better knowledge of the blade and its requirements than the polisher.

NEW MEMBERS

Sid Divers commented on the fact that we seem to have a lot of new members and we have discussed this at length. For what new members and beginners want, is to be able to tell a good sword from a bad sword. If we go over this - it has been done before - it means we shall be repeating ourselves about every three years. It might be a good idea if we went through all the old programmes and marked all the good pieces - not the controversial ones, and then publish them into a booklet, which would then be available - at a price - as a basis for further thought.

Opinions were asked for and it was agreed that articles

should be referred back to the originators to ensure accuracy and also for possible addition or bringing up to date.

One very old article on cutting tests, listing everyone who carried them out, proved to be a disaster for Sid. A sword came up at a sale with Tameshigiri. Sid promptly checked it against the then newly published list and found it was not listed. He then decided that since it was not included it could not be important so let the sword go. Later on, meeting the writer of the article, Sid mentioned the episode and discovered the writer knew of the Tameshigiri but had forgotten to put it in. Under such circumstances one forgets the useful work the writer carried out and tends to describe both his work and himself in rather basic Anglo Saxon.

It was proposed that a feasibility study on this project be carried out. Proposed by Mr. Ings, seconded Alan Bale and voted in favour unanimously. So over to the Committee for WHO, HOW AND WHEN.

The legality of reproduction was queried. A voice from the back suggested that we might argue, although everyone has given their permission for their articles to appear in the programme, it does not necessarily follow that they automatically give permission for them to appear in a booklet. But it seems reasonable to tell everyone we are going to do it, so speak now or forever hold your peace.

Alan Bale brought up the very sore point of original articles. This is exactly what Sid and I were discussing prior to the meeting. We get some very good articles but very little of it is original, most is a re-hash of others work - especially of late. A lack of research. It was suggested once before to have groups covering studies on various schools or traditions etc., but this never got off the ground. There is quite a bit of research done privately but very little of this ever comes to light, unfortunately.

The meeting was then asked for its opinions regarding the meetings for the next few months. Tonight was supposed to be a session on blades and we will go into that in a minute.

We agreed that in future film shows should be thrown in as an extra and not to form a part of the year's 12 meetings. They should be open to non-members and a nominal fee should be charged if only to cover hire of film etc.

Once again the question of sword etiquette was brought up. Arising from a suggestion that members should bring along their two best swords to have a small exhibition amongst ourselves. The general view was that the owners of decent swords

would not bring them for fear of damage. Sid recounted an episode involving a member? digging the point of someone else's sword into the floor. Charming display of manners. Once again this problem has been brought up, time and time again, with monotonous regularity, all to no avail. Even in Japan, Sid explained how he was on tenter hooks all the time in case someone should make an error in handling. It does give rise to an idea of graded membership, where only those of a certain grade would be allowed to freely examine swords, for our system is pretty risky to say the least. A chap can come along to a meeting, with no more idea of the sword and its priceless values than flying in the air, pick up someones treasure and ruin it. Then we have a talk on etiquette at the following meeting, but the chap never turns up again since he couldn't understand what all the fuss was about - it was only a ribby old sword anyway. Somehow it doesn't seem quite right - I couldn't see the Japaneseworking a system like ours.

I once had the privilege to be in a room where many priceless treasures were laid out for our enjoyment and interest. As I stood in awe and wonderment at those fantastic works of art a voice asked "Is there any Shin Shinto stuff here". I was too shattered to even reply. "All my swords from Koto to Shin Shinto were made with loving care and great skill by men who devote their lives to producing a flawless blade, whose efficiency as a cutting weapon could never be equalled. They were polished with marvellous patience and even more skill, to show the brilliance of their structure and the craftsmanship of the smith. They were then purchased for a considerable sum by men who very proudly wore them. No doubt some have saved the lives of their previous owners. All of them have been handed down over the years by proud people who respect them for what they are. Now they rest with me and I too am proud they are mine - if only for my short lifetime as compared with theirs".

Once more I have spoken. ED.

FUTURE TALKS

We got down to what members want. The answer appeared to be - blades. Many members stated that they could not tell a good blade from a bad blade. Another wanted to know how to tell an army blade from a good one.

Sid explained that an easy way to tell an old blade was by examining the Mekugi Ana (Tang Hole). A clean drilled hole denoted recent, whereas if the hole was punched out, the hole would be more hour glass shaped - larger on the faces than in the centre of the hole - this would denote an earlier blade. Also, where there is more than one hole this denotes a change in blade length. The trouble is that this applied reasonably

well until about a year ago when I came across army blades which had the tangs faked - they have even appeared at the meetings - where conical countersunk holes have been put in and the whole thing dollied up to look authentic. Similar work has also been carried out on tsuba. Tony Gibb commented that surely this proves the point that we shouldn't spend so much time just looking at tangs. Sid agreed that this was so, but many of the swords made in Shin Shinto period are copies of Koto blades and some are very good.

Gassan Teichi for instance would make you a blade in any style you care to mention and unless you were very good the blade would fool you.

It was suggested that there were much more simple signs. Peter Cottis quoted the habaki. On army type swords this tended to be of more angular section, being the same thickness at the top and bottom, with the top flat. On older blades habaki would show a curved habaki at the top and generally less angular. Although not all modern blades have this angular habaki, no old blades have them. (At the meeting I stated that this merely meant the blade had a cheap habaki. After having looked at many blades the dud Showa To all have this heavy angular habaki and the good swords in military mounts all have the more curved slimmer habaki with a thin top edge. It would indeed appear to be a quick guide).

Secondly, there is a little blunt patch on the edge just above the habaki. I've always been told that this is a reliable sign of a Showa armory blade. (Actually it is a sign of a modern blade, for instance Sa Yukihide finished some of his blades in this fashion).

This conjecture on what to look for moved backwards and forwards for some considerable time. Alan Bale explained with all due respect to new members here who would have difficulty in differentiating between the swords. After 10 years I'm still listening to how to tell Army blades from old blades, by the habaki. No one looks at the steel - to me that is the whole purpose of the Society.

(It needed saying and I'm glad that Alan has brought it up. It is very obvious that there are literally two camps - those who are starting their studies and those who have put in a lot of work and wish to move on. For those who have to continually listen to the basics it is a waste of time and many older members have left the Society to carry out their studies alone. This will continue to occur if we perpetually go back to square one all the time).

Colin Nunn brought up the idea of a split level membership

- advanced and beginners. (We have discussed this and it appears the only answer). As Colin pointed out, whatever subject is spoken about half the people in the room are either bored to tears or don't understand.

Again the question of a teacher sensai came up - it is really the answer, the only one.

A suggestion was made that we try to arrange an evening, at possibly Bethnal Green Museum, to look at some of the swords there. Good idea, Sid agreed to contact Basil Robinson and see if this could be arranged. After much more discussion John Anderson offered to give a talk on Armour in the near future, possibly August.

Members who had brought blades along were asked to show them, so that we could get on with the discussion on blades that didn't look as if it would ever start. However it did.

Peter Cottis passed around a Tanto, recently back from polish in Japan. Signed Bishu Osafune Kiyomitsu, dated Muromachi Boshi had an enormous turn back, fairly simple wood grain and the hamon suguha and rather fuzzy. Peter described the next Tanto as being signed Hori Ken but did not know what it meant. Teremine describes it as Mino Jumyo which is a school. No one present could add anything further. There was much discussion as to whether it was an armour piercing dirk, but it was generally agreed that the first few inches were too thin to be effective.

Next a blade with faults appeared and Sid described these to members. It had Tateware, which are lengthwise cracks (not serious) in the folding. Also it had Mukade Shinae (lines like wrinkles on the Shinogi ji). It also had a peculiar criss-cross effect on the ji. This I have seen before but never an explanation of it. Can anybody help?

At this point everyone got terribly involved looking at blades near them and discussing faults and the meeting petered out.

JULY MEETING

The meeting opened with the Chairman welcoming a new member, John Gregar, who came along for the first time.

Write-ups of the Token Trip to Japan have appeared in two Japanese Sword Journals. One is the Token Shunju published by Kasuo Uda, the other is the To-En Journal published by Toen Sha which is Murakami Kosuke and in this, on the front page, is the photo of our arrival and further down is shown the signatures of all those who went to Murakami's house. There is also a big

article about our trip. Sidney Divers stated that he was trying to get copies and translations of the To-En Journal for all those who went to Japan. Extra copies of the Japan Times were passed around to those interested.

One of the best books we bought in Japan was Shoku Nin Shoku Dan. We are now getting this translated completely into English and it will be published in the programme in instalments - once it starts to arrive.

POLISHING: The position is now as follows:

Mr. Usui, the Japanese gentleman who is trying to make the necessary arrangements, came over for a few days last month and we were able to clear up some of the queries. There will be four grades of polish. Cheap polish, medium polish, green paper polish and Juyo polish.

The quotation being made to us is per inch of blade.

Half of the polishing cost is to be paid upon submission of the blade and the remainder upon collection. The grade of polish must be nominated. What this will cost should soon be available.

The polisher can only do 10 swords a month on average. This is taking Katana, Wakisashi, Tanto into account. We expected to finalise about the 9th July.

The next meeting, 5th August, will be on Armour - Speaker John Anderson.

Bon Dale has intimated (something he claims never to do - in public at least) that he is quite prepared to give a talk on the Los Angeles Shinsa, with slides and photos etc. in line with the talk he gave before on the Dallas Shinsa. This will be something well worth looking forward to and will possibly be Nov. or later.

Tonight we are very fortunate indeed in having our President, B.W. Robinson, with us. Most people know Robby but to those members who don't I should tell you he is the author of Primer of Japanese Sword Blades, author of The Arts of the Japanese Sword and the author of many books on Japanese Prints including a book on Kuniyoshi prints and one on Hiroshige prints. Now, he has travelled quite extensively to places like Tashkent, Samakand and other places East of Suez and South West of Kab..... What strikes me as quite extraordinary about Basil Robinson is the fact that he was invited a few years ago to Persia to lecture on Persian painting to the Persians. He

reads Japanese fluently, so now I'd like to give you Robbie - scholar and soldier.

(NOTE: The speech is produced exactly as spoken and I apologise for taking Robbie unawares).

REMINISCENCE - B.W. Robinson, President

I do think that we have been extraordinarily fortunate in the Society in our Chairman for the last year. The amount of work, the amount of organisation, the amount of results he has produced is, I think, beyond admiration. I'm sure that we are all conscious of this ut I feel I must mention it here.

When he asked me to give a talk I was rather at a loss. I am a constant reader of the programme and an occasional attender at meetings. More occasional than I should wish I am afraid.

Some of you may find, as I have found: as you get older you get more and more demands on your time. It becomes more and more difficult to fit everything in. However, I do try and come when I can. As to the programme, there again I think we can congratulate ourselves, we all owe, I think, a very warm debt of gratitude and appreciation to those concerned.

Having those two things in mind, the meetings and the programme, I fully realise that to most members anything that I could say on Kantei or the development and history of the schools of Japanese swordsmiths, would be no news whatever - so I decided upon REMINISCENCE. This will prove, I hope, to be interesting, especially to some of the younger members to hear of sword years gone by.

To put you into the chronological framework, I'd better start by saying that I was born almost exactly 62 years ago within 5 minutes of the Victoria and Albert Museum and that seems to have exercised a certain effect upon me.

From a very early age my mother and any resident aunts about, used to take me to the museum because this was the easiest way to occupy my time and keep me amused. Very soon I was sent to the museums on my own because in those halcyon days there was very little traffic in the Cromwell Road, and a small boy could safety go on his own - without fear of being assaulted, mugged, run over, or anything else. So when my parents had a grown up tea party or anything like that, that I might find boring, they would send me off to the museums to amuse myself.

First of all, I went to the Natural History Museum and I became very much attached to the extinct animals. I

remember going down that gallery with the looming great skeletons of Mastodons and so forth. Names like Triceratops and Megalosaurus used to trip off my tongue quite lightly. That was a short stage and very soon I graduated to the Victoria & Albert Museum by walking a bit further. There for some unknown reason the Oriental things seemed to click with me, why I don't know - there is no family reason. My poor parents were quite mystified by this curious line that I developed. Anyway there it was. I can remember I went to a little pre-prep school when I was seven and stayed there till I was nine. While I was there - it was at a little place called Crowborough in Sussex, which some of you may know - we used to go for walks in the pine woods near there and from that datesmy first conscious recollection of knowing what the Japanese sword was. For in the pine woods were broken branches and we used to fight each other with them. I remember noticing these branches were long and curved and if you broke off all the little twigs except the last set and you left those twigs about ½ inch long and had a long handle beyond them that was a Japanese sword. That was what I used in my combats with my fellow pupils. I must then have been aged 8 or so.

When I went to my Prep School, I think the most significant thing was my introduction to Tales of Old Japan by Mitford. If any of you haven't read this, then I strongly recommend you to do so. It is one of the most marvellous books on Japan ever written. It's a most extraordinary thing that it was first written in 1871 when Japan was hardly open, by a young under-secretary of our Envoy in Japan. Yet it gives the most marvellous picture of pre-Meiji Japan that anyone could wish to have. This book was owned by another boy in the school - I can still remember that dreadful picture of poor Chobei in the bath, being speared and all the blood coming out. Very soon afterwards the book was confiscated by the Headmaster as he thought it wasn't quite suitable for us to read. The finer points of adultery and so forth went over our heads at that age but he apparently didn't think they would.

I still had this interest in the back of my mind, as time went on. When I went to my public school at Winchester, quite early in my timethen,I used to get leave to go out in the town and go round the antique shops. There I bought my first Japanese sword, for four shillings and sixpence. It was a long one in very bad condition with no scabbard, but was stuck into the scabbard of an Indian Tulwar that was covered in green velvet. But I was very proud of this sword. At the same shop, a little later on, I bought two very nice little Japanese tobacco pipes (three shillings the two). One of them was signed and the other unsigned but with very nice Kaga inlay work with little figures of men on rafts on a river. This was when I first encountered the immortal A.J. Koop (whom we all know in association with Mr. Inada).

I persuaded my mother to take me to the Victoria & Albert and knock on Mr. Koops door to ask him what the signature on one of these pipes was. She duly carried out this task for me. Koop was extremely kind and pleasant, took me in and read the signature and he found that he hadn't got it in his book. So he wrote it in his book, which I now have in my office and I can see where he wrote this signature from my little pipe.

Also about this time, I became particularly interested in Japanese prints, especially Kuniyoshi, because the British Museum (in I believe 1924) had the last of a series of exhibitions of Japanese prints. They had been going through them chronologically, and this was the last one taking in Hiroshige and Kuniyoshi. I remember my mother taking me there and going to the gallery and seeing, straight ahead of me, that wonderful triptych of the great skeleton looming over against a black background and the witch reading out the spell from the scroll - that was the moment when Kuniyoshi clicked with me. I went to the exhibition several times afterwards on my own - because in those days of course one could get on the train at Gloucester Road, pay 4 pence and get to Holborn.

It was a short step from there to desire prints of Kuniyoshi and there was at that time, near the British Museum in New Oxford Street, a little shop kept by a Japanese called Kato Shozo. He was, I gather, a member of an old Samurai family, who had set up this shop in London. He was extremely knowledgeable and as I know now, known to all the big collectors of that time. If any of you know Joly's Legend in Japanese Art, the calligraphy of the little poems, he often has in the margin, was written by Kato Shozo and he acknowledges him in the preface.

He was very kind to me. I went first with my father and later on on my own account and took up hours of his time, pulling out his prints and making him translate the inscriptions and so on - eventually buying a print for perhaps a few shillings.

I actually bought my first Kuniyoshi print there for five shillings. I found that in the Sicilian Arcade - some of you may know, just around the corner from there - there was a shop called Ken Moshino, a rather misleading name since it was kept by an extremely English person called Mr. Tommey who always wore a bowler hat. They had some prints there and would sell you a triptych for ten and sixpence - I got several triptychs there, generally after Christmas when I could afford it. Mr. Tommey died, I'm afraid, 10 to 15 years ago but I used to see him at sales after the war - still with his bowler hat and always very genial.

With this interest in Japanese prints I got the handbook

published by the Victoria & Albert Museum by E.F. Strange - first published in 1908 and last edition 1931. I got my copy in 1925 and it has my name and the date written in. When I used to wake up early in the morning in the summer, I would take out Strange and read it in bed. Those of you who know the book, will know that there are about 4 pages of excellent reproductions of signatures. That I think was my first introduction to Japanese writing and I used to pore over these and look them up in the index and I would get terribly worried when I found the same character was sometimes read Haru and sometimes Shun and I couldn't understand it at all but I had to accept it.

Whilst at University I didn't do much on the Japanese side because I was too busy, working, playing darts or playing the guitar in the University Jazz band or one thing and another. University is a very busy time but I always had it in the back of my mind that I wanted a job in the museum. When I finished University I found that there were no vacancies at either the British Museum or the Victoria & Albert - so I had to take a job and I chose one in a prep school at Bognor Regis. I was paid the sum of £120 a year for teaching small boys Latin, English and Scripture. After a year it went up to £150 but fortunately my mother was still at home then, so I could live at home in the holidays and of course everything was found during the term so one managed to rub along. In fact I can remember evenings with the staff with a number of quart bottles of beer lined up in the common room and we managed that quite often.

Eventually I was summoned to an interview at the Victoria and Albert Museum and I was turned down. I had one more chance, about a year later, so I went up again and got on the short list. In those days they had about 200 -300 applicants for each post and what they did was to weed out the majority on their papers and summon about 50 or 60 to an interview from which about 6 were selected for the final interview. I got to the final interview the second time and had great hopes - I went back to my prep school and waited for the communication, which I eventually got, which said Mr. So & So has been elected. So I thought I would be schoolmastering for the rest of my life but quite soon after I had another letter from the Museum saying that one of the ladies on the staff had got married and it was necessary for her to retire, which was the rule in those days. Rather than have all the mechanism of another selection board they offered me the job - as I apparently was runner-up on the last occasion. Of course I jumped at it. So I got on the museum staff. I would mention that the selection procedure was interesting. We went for our actual interview before a horse-shoe of civil servants who merely went through what we had

filled in on our papers already - they really just wanted to get a look at you and see if you could talk and so on. Then we were put into another room where there were a number of museum objects of all kinds and we had to choose any six of them and write museum labels for them. That was alright for me, for I had been an habitue of the museum for a good many years and so I was able to make quite a convincing job of that. Then we went into another room and were told to write for a quarter of an hour on the development of style in English silver in the 18th Century. Well that would have been a facer except that when I was at University I was in the habit of drinking beer before dinner in hall. When we drank beer before dinner in hall we drank it in a place called the Buttery, that's just across the corridor from hall and the Buttery was kept and the beer was served by a gentleman called Mr. Cross, who had been in the service of the college for about 40 years and if you wanted to keep in Mr. Cross's good books, you asked him to show you the college silver, from time to time, because he also kept the college silver. As a result I knew the college silver fairly well - therefore when I was faced with this question, I had a mental note of the college silver in my mind and perhaps didn't write such nonsense as I might otherwise have done. I realise now that the museum didn't expect one to know all about English silver of the 18th century - all they wanted to know was whether you had observed English silver because everyone in their lives sees examples of silver and they wanted to know whether you had observed them intelligently or not.

So now I was in the museum. To start with I was put in the library, which is a very good thing, for the library is the heart beat of the museum and if you can find your way about the library it's half the battle - you know where to find information and I was very glad for that.

Then there was a vacancy in the Department of Metalwork and I was transferred there on my own request because I knew that Metalwork had a large Oriental collection both Japanese and near Eastern, mostly Persian, which I'm also very interested in. There I found that they had a splendid departmental library of Japanese books on swords - all the old books - Koto, Shinto, Meidzukushi and so on. I buried myself in those and I think I improved my ability to get information from them. I also went through the collection of swords and here I was very horrified because I found that about a year before I entered the department there had been a disposals board. People often say to me in the museum, here you are in the museum and you have so much down below that nobody ever sees, how do you get rid of it. Well we do get rid of it sometimes, we get rid of it by a rather cumbersome procedure called a disposals board. What happens is that the Keeper of the Department concerned has a list made of objects he thinks superfluous or undesirable in some way. He then sends

a Minute to the Director with this list and he says "I wish to have these objects disposed of - kindly appoint a disposals board". The Director appoints two other members of the museum staff and they sit on the objects and decide what is to be done with them. They have a number of alternatives - they can either be offered to other institutions as gifts, they can be put up to public auction anonymously or they can be destroyed.

Well I found that about a year before I entered the department, there had been a disposals board on Japanese swords. The Keeper at the time was a retired military gentleman and very good on European Arms and Armour, but had absolutely no feelings for the East. He had suffered under A.J. Koop, who was Keeper before him and had rather hogged the whole field for Japanese stuff and I think he was trying to get his own back. Anyway he put a great number of swords on the disposals board and the other two members of the board were the Keeper of the Textiles Department and a young gentleman who had recently entered the Department of Sculpture. They were hardly qualified, I think, to pronounce on Japanese swords and we lost a great many Japanese swords, including examples by Senjuin, Sukehiro of Osaka and Sa Yukihide - they were written down as duplicates!! Well I had to swallow this as best I could for the swords were already sold.

Then came the war. At the beginning I was put into the Royal Sussex Regiment, for reasons beyond me, I reached the rank of paid Corporal - after which I was sent to the pre O.C.T.U. establishment at Wrotham in Kent. I don't know whether any of our older members had any experience of that, but it was an alarming experience. One spent ones time swinging over rivers on ropes and climbing up banks with a sergeant pumping in Bren gun bullets about 6 inches below your feet. Quite invigorating. Soon after I got there I got an attack of mumps - I'm glad to tell you, without complications. For that I was put in the sick bay and when I got back onto parade, I found I'd been put into another company. The company I was put in was paraded one morning and the C.O. arrived, gave us a talk and said we were all for India. This was the time of the terrible retreat in Burma when they were crying out for officers in the Indian Army - so there it was, we all went to India.

I may say, if I had not got mumps and remained in the company I was originally in, I would probably have been blown up at Anzio, so I'm rather thankful I got mumps.

I did my Officers training at Bangalore and was eventually commissioned into the 2nd Punjab Regiment - learnt Urdu by the way and during the posting at Headquarters I asked if I couldn't be sent on the Japanese language course, which they were running

at Simla. Oh no, they said, you're an infantryman, obviously you can't be sent on anything like that. So they sent me on an infantry course at Sangor where I had the bren gun, rivers and all that over again. Eventually I was sent to the Intelligence School at Karachi and did the course there. At the end of the course we all had to do an original task. For this original task I did an essay which I called the Sword and the Fan which was an attempt - with historical parallels and so on - to estimate the Japanese character, how they would react and so on. This got quite a good mark, so I was sent to 14th Army Headquarters, which was then at Comilla and was the most ghastly place in Eastern Bengal, a good many feet below sea level, honeycombed with tanks. Tank is Indian for stagnant pool. It also had mosquitoes, dysentery, prickly heat - the lot, they were all there. I can remember in fact the first night I arrived at Comilla I ran into a chap I'd known at Bangalore and he said "Oh, do come and have dinner at our mess tomorrow night". I said "Thank you very much" and he showed me where it was. The following night I went there, had a very nice dinner and I was quite sober at the end of it but it was quite dark. I came out and thought, I know my way home quite well. I stepped briskly out and suddenly found myself over my head in water. I managed to scramble out and got home in a very dejected condition. I had to go to work the next morning, in the office, passing the same tank. I looked at the tank and I saw the filth that had accumulated where I had gone in the previous night. Anyway this story, I'm afraid, is not very much to do with Japanese swords at the moment.

Actually we went into Burma and had a certain amount of contact with the Japanese. I always remember the excitement of our first Japanese officer prisoner. He was a young man, I think he was rather an intellectual. He had, purposely I think, got behind on the retreat in order to be captured. He was captured and gave us a lot of information and wrote some propaganda pamphlets for us. He was kept in a little sort of cage enclosure and the officers at headquarters used to go and look at him like an animal in a zoo. I remember him being taken to my colleague. With the Japanese order of battle, in fact I was there at the time. My colleague Blandford asked "What's your name and rank". He gave his name and rank. Then he flipped over his file and said "Oh yes, you were at the Military Academy of so-and-so" between 1935 and 1936, then you were commissioned so-and-so". He gave the chap his whole life-history and this chap was so deflated by this; he realised we knew everything, or thought we did, so he gave us everything we wanted.

Then came eventually the Japanese surrender and I was sent over to Singapore. At Singapore it somehow got out that

I had done a certain amount of work on Japanese Art at one time and another, and perhaps knew a little more about Japanese swords and so on than my fellow officers. I was given the job of sorting out about 1800 Japanese surrendered swords in a large gymnasium in Singapore, deciding which should be given to Brigadiers, which should be given to Colonels, to Majors and so on. That was a very instructive experience. I saw this vast mass of Japanese swords and I really knew very little then, much less than I know now. It was interesting to see the sort of proportions, I would say the proportions were roughly 75% Showa, of the remainder at least three-quarters Shinto with a small residue of Koto at the end and an extremely small residue of very fine blades. Because, obviously, this task was beyond me in my state of knowledge at the time, I sent down to the Japanese prisoner-of-war camp and asked if they had anybody there who knew about swords. They sent me up a splendid chap called Colonel Yamada who had been a judge of swords in the Japanese army for thirty years. He and I and an interpreter, a young Japanese officer, went through these swords. I then saw a real Japanese sword expert going to work, taking a thing out, saying "Oh yes, so-and-so, so-and-so". The interpreter wrote it down, and when we took the hilt off, yes there it was sure enough. It was fantastic. He was a very nice chap, he obviously wasn't interested in the war, he just wanted to get back home. He was a man of about fifty and wanted to get back to his family. Actually I did get in touch with him after the war but that's another story.

It was very funny, one never knew what was actually going to happen to these swords. I was told I mustn't keep any swords myself but would get one in due course. Most of the good ones were sent up to Lord Mountbatten's headquarters where I think they were given to people who came to dinner with him. Most of the others were presented to various high-ranking officers. Lieutenants and Captains, as I was then, got the Showa To, sometimes even the non-commissioned officers swords; you know those ghastly things with metal handles.

When eventually I got back to this country, in 1946 just after August Bank Holiday, I went back to the museum. I came back into a world of collectors and my own desk, back to the books, back to the sword. It was very interesting then, as now, to look back on that little world; there was a very small tightly-knit group of collectors at that time. There was a late lamented member, Captain Johnes, whom many of you remember was a prominent member of course. There was also Clement Millward, a funny little man with an absolute passion for Japanese swords, with a withered arm and other physical disabilities. He really had the spirit of Japanese swords in his heart. He had been buying, dealing and collecting for a number of years before the war.

Then there was Captain Craig, a magnificent man, an Olympic Fencer, who had been collecting for a long time. He lived in Tite Street, in a magnificent studio. He also collected Netsuke and other things, a delightful man. He had some very fine Japanese swords which he bought at Yamanaka's. In pre-war days there were two great Japanese dealers in Japanese art and antiquities, Yamanaka in Bond Street and Murakami in the Bond Street area. Yamanaka's had two quite well-known exhibitions of Japanese swords, everything was for sale of course, and one or two of you may have seen catalogues of these circulating. Craigh bought several swords from these exhibitions, the first of these which was in 1912 when he was quite a young man.

There was, then General, now Field Marshal Sir Francis Festing who was a very great figure indeed. He was known as Front-line Frankie in the war because he led the assault personally on the beaches at Madagascar. He also did a lot of behind-the-lines work in Burma; he was a marvellous man and still is. Unfortunately he has gone from London back to his ancestral home in Northumberland, near Hexham. At this time he was working in the war office and he was extremely active, he got the Japanese sword bug right in his marrow. I remember going to a little flat he used to occupy near Paddington and the walls were covered with Japanese swords, there were Japanese swords under the bed in just the small bed sitting room. Once you were in there there was nothing else you were allowed to mention, there would be sword after sword after sword and you had to say "Yes, yes, yes, of course" and then you read the signature "yes". I remember being there once with a man called David Blumenfeld who was another of this little circle who ran an antique shop in Church Street. He had had some very fine swords through his hands including one by Jitsua which unfortunately he had sold to a man called Ball who gave it back to the Japanese. Frankie Festing was showing us some particular dirk which was very loose in the scabbard. When David Blumenfeld took it from him it fell out of the scabbard and gave him quite a cut on the thigh. Frankie took no notice of the cut, he seized the sword and wiped it and put it back. After a while we asked "Are you all right old boy?" He's gone over now to European firearms but he still keeps his best Japanese swords.

We all used to go to the sales at Glendinnings and meet each other. A lot of very fine stuff turned up and was knocked down for ridiculous prices. I remember the sensation caused the first time £50 was reached for a Japanese sword. It was a shortened blade by Masamune, which has since been authenticated, in a very elaborate silver mounting, scabbard and hilt by Hamano Masauki and Frank Festing bought it amid gasps from the saleroom.

Another there I remember was Denys Bower. He used to sit in the saleroom with a pencil in his hand and hold it up until it went and of course things went quite cheaply then and he got a great deal. Then he got Chiddingstone Castle and set these things out - he also has a good collection of Egyptian antiquities there and also a number of Stuart relics and Jacobite relics.

I remember when Glendinings moved from Argyle Street to where they are now in Blenheim Street. Raymond Johnes gave a delightful speech at the end of the last sale, he got up and said that for so many years Glendinings had been a pleasant club where people interested in Japanese things could meet and compete amicably and so on - it made a pleasant and rather touching occasion.

After moving to Blenheim Street, unfortunately they went down hill rather badly and now do no more of it.

Another amusing thing that happened just after the war was that I was rung up by the British Museum and asked if I could read a signature on a Japanese sword. I said I would try and it turned out to be quite a simple one - Hisamitsu of Osafune, Bizen. I wrote the signature down and sent it back to them and then got a letter from the owner of the sword who was a chap called Lloyd. He was an enormously rich man who had made his money in cardboard boxes of all things - he occupied 4 suites of rooms in the Albany. Two of them were for himself and the other two housed his collections. His great love was English beetles. He started collecting these when he was at school and he had one of the large rooms full of cabinets of English beetles He also collected early Flemish paintings, of which he had several. He had about 50 Turner watercolours and a great deal of other miscellaneous stuff but a great deal of Japanese stuff which he had bought at the famous sales in the 20's, Thomkinson - Behrens and so on. One small room was full of swords - there was no furniture - just swords all over the floor. Some mounted, some in Shirasaya and he asked me if I could tell him something about these swords. I said "Well, yes, given time". So I went through these swords and they were a really fine lot. Even the ones I didn't believe were right, were jolly good blades anyway. I made a catalogue for him and he eventually left them to the British Museum where they are now. This excited his self-esteem and he decided to go back to the saleroom for more and he bought the most dreadful trash and didn't much like it when I most tactfully told him so. I feel that the previous ones he bought on advice and very good advice at that, for he himself knew absolutely nothing about them - he would say "Isn't there a funny little water mark you look for on the blade". Several

of the swords were oiled and he had got a beautiful cleaning set from Japan and he asked me why he hadn't been able to polish them. He seemed to think that the uchiko would miraculously make the oil disappear. He had the best tools and didn't know how to use them.

This now brings me up to recent times and I can only mention two or three swords that have passed through my hands at the museum in the last 30 or 40 years.

One of which you have certainly seen - "Dew on the grass" which was brought in to me by a retired military officer very soon after the war, when I really knew very little. I saw it was a very nice blade and I asked the Keeper of the Department if he would like to back a proposal to buy it for the museum, but he said "No - we have plenty of Japanese swords". So I asked this chap what he would like for it - I said you could get a dealer or auctioneer to put a price on it. He went off, and came back later and said £10 so I said alright - and that was "Dew on the grass".

The next one was brought in by a dealer who didn't really know Japanese swords. It was a very nice quietly mounted Tachi with a red lacquer scabbard, as I remember, and shakudo mounts with a very lovely 19th century blade dated Tempo something or other and signed Masayuki.At that time I didn't realise it was the early signature of Kiyomaro. Anyway I liked it -- he said it wouldn't be any good to him, so I asked what he wanted for it. He said he gave £7 for it so £8 would be O.K. and I got it. I sent it to Japan for polishing and they got quite excited over it - it was apparently dated at a time when there were no other examples of Kiyomaro's work. Anyway when it came back I had no peace from Field Marshal Festing for he saw it and was determined to get it, but I didn't really want to sell and I knew he had a very nice blade by Nobuhide, so we eventually were both happy by making a swop. I may say that the Nobuhide blade came up at Glendinings in the early days - it was part of Murakami's old stock that was confiscated during the war and sold by public auction according to law in about 1949 I suppose. About a dozen swords, most of them good, came up then but in rather poor condition. Frank Festing had bought it then and sent it to Japan and it came back beautifully polished.

Another thing that happened about that time was that Captain Craig gave me an invaluable little book by Fujishiro - I can't remember the exact title of it but it had the whole essential knowledge of Japanese swords in a tiny compass and I managed to work a lot out on this book and I thought this is the sort of book that collectors over here want, so I set to work on it and got most of the information out of it and produced it as 'The Primer of Japanese Sword Blades'.

It was funny, I had been asked by the Arms and Armour Society, which I also belong to, if I would not write something for them on Japanese swords. I said yes, and produced this and when I did they said "Oh I don't think we can publish this - not sufficient demand". So I published it myself. I had it printed and it sold at 12/6 a time, I think, and I had 250 printed and they went in no time. I also had the compliment of being pirated by an American firm, and if you ever get a copy that's slightly larger you will know it's by the American pirate. I didn't get a penny from them. Now the Arms & Armour Society want to publish it again.

The next was that Fabers were doing a series on Oriental Art and they asked me to do one on Japanese swords and I expanded and adapted the Primer and had a number of illustrations done - which I am afraid were very bad, but hardly my fault as I am not a photographer. It was published in 1961 and has now been re-published again (Arts of the Japanese Sword) and I really think that is as good a point as any to cease.

After sitting enthralled as Robbie unwound this fascinating story, which was interjected with most interesting stories that unfortunately cannot be published, the members burst into life with the noisiest applause ever heard at the Princess Louise. True gratitude to a great man.

Then of course came the inevitable questions, from which we learnt Sid Divers had the first copy of The Primer autographed (gratis). He also used to pester Robbie with all his oshigatas from the various buys from the early sales. Knowing Sid I can imagine absolute wads of them going backwards and forwards.

Robbie served under General Masabe at Kohima and Impal. Masabe had two swords, one was a Kanemoto Seki Magoroku and one was a very crappy wakizashi. About 2 years ago he put the wakizashi into Sothebys and the best bid was probably £40 - it was brought back. The Kanemoto II he gave to the British Museum. The question was, if he had given the wakizashi to the British Museum and put the Kanemoto into the sale, this would be a different story, so what made him do a thing like that - was it a mistake?

Robbie stated that although he didn't know General Masabe personally he thought him to be a very honest man and thought that he really felt he should give the good one to the museum. The sword belonged to General Kagaki who was the Japanese Commander in Singapore and surrendered to Masabe. It was vetted and completely described by Colonel Yamada. He was summoned to General Headquarters, which was on a hill,

it was a pouring wet day and from a window he saw Colonel Yamada toiling up the hill looking very bedraggled. Yamada gave Robbie a copy of his verdict on this sword - it was a very fine one indeed.

This Kanemato is in military mounts and was on display a few years ago. For information - Kanemoto 2nd generation, popularly known as Magoroku Kanemoto, is the best of the Kanemoto's - his swords are also classified O Wazamono (supreme sharpness). His trademark is Sanbon Sugi. With the four Kanemotos the tendency is for the Sanbon sugi to be sharper with later generations - the first generations are not at all sharp and quite irregular. Also it may be recalled Yukio Mishima the author and playwright, who had a strange preoccupation with death, committed seppuku with a Kanemoto II.

With regard to knowing to whom which particular surrendered sword belonged it was pointed out that in some instances the swords were surrendered personally, in which case the owners and usually history were known. Generally however swords were surrendered en masse and put into dumps. A lot however had little cloth tags with the name of the former Japanese owner. There have been a number of cases of swords being returned by the British Officers to whom they were surrendered. Frankie Festing, for instance, returned the sword of General Takahashi Unfortunately General Takahashi died but his widow was traced living in great poverty and the sword was returned to her. It was instrumental in her receiving recompense from the Japanese government. A number of officers have wished to return their swords, some have, but it's not that easy.

Robbie then told another interesting story. A man I served with at Impal, Reid Collins, after the Japanese surrender was in charge of one of these war criminal investigation units. He asked me if I would like to come to Japan with him on this basis. I thought about it, but I didn't like the idea really at all. I think the whole of this war criminal business was rather overdone. Anyway he went to Japan and told me afterwards he was driving through the country and he came to an American Ordnance Depot so he thought he would pop in and take a cup of coffee with the Commanding Officer. He drove in and obtained his coffee and the C.O. asked if he would like to see around the establishment. He said he would and on the walk he came to a shed and beside the shed was a pile of Japanese swords about 10 feet high. On asking what they were he was told they were surrendered swords and going to be taken by the Mitsubishi company to make into knives, spoons, etc. Reid Collins didn't know anything about swords himself but I had talked to him a little about them, so he asked if it were possible for him to have a couple or so and was told, you can take as many as you like - take 50. With extraordinary alarcrity and brightness Reid Collins dashed into Tokyo - which was quite close - went

to Inami Hakusui, explained the circumstances and whipped Inami back in his jeep. Inami chose the best 50 swords in that pile and Reid Collins took them off. They were eventually brought back to England and dumped on me at the Victoria & Albert Museum for some time. I sorted them out and made a list and they were sold to a syndicate of Frankie Festing and Captain Craig for £300. He very kindly gave me one - which was a very nice slim little dirk with a turned over signature of Kunitsugu - nobody knows quite which Kunitsugu it is.

A lot of other surrendered swords were dumped into the sea off Siam. Quite a lot were chopped up by guillotine like machines in various places - melted down and they came out as knives and forks.

Most of the swords that have come into this country started in the 1870s onward. A big bequest of swords was made to the V. & A. in 1908, by a man called Davidson. I haven't been able to find out much about him but he must have been in Japan in the 1880 & 90s and obviously collected blades rather than anything else for a lot were in Shira Saya, and very carefully annotated in his handwriting on the wood from what he had been told by Japanese. Also some time ago I had a letter from a man in Philadelphia called Valinski who said his grandfather had made a great collection of Japanese swords in Japan in the 1870s and 80s. He sent me a list which was fantastic - Amakuni, Munechika, the lot - you name it and they had it. I told him he really should do something about them and I think he's given them to the Philadelphia Museum. So I think you can say they were being collected intelligently from the 1870s and 80s - but the great time of course was the 1900 to 1915 the pre-war Edwardian period. There was Tomkinson, Beherns, Church, Gilbertson, all those who had the great sales in the 20s that Joly wrote the catalogues on - that we all covet so much.

After the sword prohibition edict of 1877 shiploads of armour and swords came over for the curio market and they simply went to the antique shops and auction room dealers and of course a lot of them were very poor. At the same time - early Meigi - there was a great down on Buddhism - rather like Henry VIII and the monasteries - and a lot of Buddhist monasteries etc. were closed and there was a terrific boom in bronze. All the bronze lanterns and bells were shipped over here simply to be melted down. At that time, 1873-74, we got those big lanterns that are now in the quadrangle and the cannons, and in fact a number of jolly good big Japanese bronzes that would otherwise have been melted down. It was very good bronze of course.

To wind up the meeting Robbie kindly agreed that we can hold a meeting at the V. & A., possibly in the Lecture Theatre, sometime from Oct. onwards. It will be much more convenient than

Bethnal Green where we would probably be liable to interruption.

It would have to be earlier than normal, preferably 6 o'clock. He will bring 6 controversial blades and it would last for maybe 1 to 1½ hours. A list of blades would be submitted prior to the meeting to enable all members to swot up on the works of the smiths.

CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW FOR THE YEAR

S.V. DIVERS

As this is the last Programme before the election of the new committee in September I think we should summarise the events and achievements of the year and our hopes for the future. We have done most of the things we set out to do, but not all. Our Japanese dinner was a great success, so were the outstanding papers by Fred Maitland on lacquer, Basil Robinson on reminiscences, Tony Chapman on the Japanese trip, amongst many others. We had a samurai film and we flogged the monthly auctions till these died a natural death.

The outstanding event of the year was of course the sword tour in Japan and we, as the Token Society, can be proud of this as we went to places where even the Japanese could not go, and we brought back some knowledge to help fellow members who could not take part in the trip.

Looking back on the year I would like to have seen more papers on fittings. We appear to have neglected tsuba completely and concentrated on blades. Possibly the new committee in September could alter this. In my opinion the most important constitutional decision for this Society should be that no Chairman should be elected for 2 consecutive years. It was interesting to hear the Hawley tape that a similar view was expressed by him. I think we have to generate new blood and give an opportunity to others to take on the responsibility.

Finally, I wish to thank all our Committee for the support they have given me during the year. Particular thanks to Tony Chapman for such a fine job as Programme Editor. If it was just left to me I would suggest he would make the ideal next Chairman of the Society.

The way the Society will go in future depends on you all attending the A.G.M. in September and voting in a new committee, so let us please have a large attendance.

My apologies for not being able to get to a meeting of the Northern Branch, it was not for want of trying I assure you but something always seemed to crop up on the days they held their meetings.

Let us hope the next year will be as successful or better than this one has been.

CORRECTION TO PROGRAMME 80 - Sid Divers

MURAKAMI KOSUKE is Editor in Chief of the TO-EN Sword Magazine not the NBTHK journal as inadvertently stated in the last programme. The TO-EN Sword magazine appears each month and is full of interesting information on blades, tsuba, etc. and contains oshigata. Regularly, since the magazine started many years ago, I have been receiving a free copy each month probably due to the occasional article which I write for them which they publish. I understand that a write-up on our visit has been published and copies are on the way for each of our Token party. MURAKAMI is also custodian for some very important National treasure swords which Tony Chapman, Vic Harris and myself saw in 1970.

LETTER FROM HAN BING SIONG

This gentleman has really done his homework - so enjoy this letter - it has some excellent information. Thank you Mr. Han it is a great pleasure to hear from you.

July 16,1974.

Dear Mr. Chapman,

Thank you very much for the two excellent accounts in Programme No.80 on the trip to Japan. For those who have joined the trip they are a very welcome addition to their holiday-diaries, and a check, too, for wrong written or mental notes.

For instance, I clearly remember that one of the blades by Tomonari in the Token Hakubutsukan had a kijimomo nakago. But I don't know any longer whether it was the blade in the show-case (No.13) or the one which we were allowed to handle. As you have not mentioned that special nakago in your detailed description of the Tomonari we have examined, it must have been the other one. For a photo of the Tomonari with Kijimomo nakago see Nihon no Bijutsu No.73 photo No.27. A full sketch of that sword is to be found in the Journal of Swords Token Bijutsu No.178 of November 1971 frontispiece (length: 2 shaku 4 sun 7 bu). Tracings of the upper part and the nakago are seen in Nihon no Meito by Shibata Mitsuo and Okochi Tsunehira page 86 and Nihonto Taikan kotohen II page 14. Incidentally, No.13 in the exhibition room of the Token Hakubutsukan mentioned on page 19 of Programme No.80 was a Juyo Bijutsuhin as well (see Token Bijutsu No.206 of March 1974, page 42.)

When we were shown the Tomonari at the Ueno National Museum I could not believe my eyes. Because of the horimono I thought I could recognise a blade I have seen so many times before in various books, so I asked Mr. Kashima through Mr. Inami and got it confirmed. For those who are interested, I refer to

Nobuo Ogasawara, Japanese swords, page 18
Nihonto Zenshu, Volume I page 129 and Volume III page 171

Nihonto Taikan, kotohen II photo No.2
Nihon Meito Ten, page 4
Nihon no Bijutsu No.73, photos No.13 and 26.

According to Mr. Ogasawara this blade is one of Tomonari's best works along with the Nightingale sword (Meibutsu Uguisu-maru) owned by Tenno Heika. In fact it is one of the two Tomonari-blades that are Kokuho. Of the second Kokuho-Tomonari there are photos in Nihonto Zenshu Volume II page 75, Nihon no Bijutsu No.73 photo No.28 and Nihonto Taikan kotohen II photo No.3. The blade is the property of Ikatsushima Jinja on the island of Miyashima. Mr. Turnbull has written a very interesting article about that island in Programme No.80.

When examining the Tomonari in the Ueno National Museum I could not discover the utsuri. You have not mentioned it either in your description on page 14. According to Mr. Kashima, however, faint utsuri is present. It is interesting that the Nihonto Zensu (Volume I page 129 and Volume III page 179) and Nihon Meito Ten do not mention utsuri, whereas the Nihonto Taikan and Nihon no Bijutsu No.73 page 37 do mention it. By the way, the Tomonari we have seen in the Ueno National Museum had four mekugi ana, two of which linked together. The signature reads "Bizen no kuni Tomonari tsukuru".

I remember having seen a fourth blade by Tomonari. It was in the exhibition-room of Kasuga shrine in Nara, a slender tachi bearing the signature Tomonari.

As regards the total of Tomonari-blades in Japan, I think there are more than five. In the kotohen of Fujishiro's Nihon Toko Jiten the nakago of 5 of them are illustrated. None of these are the Meibutsu Uguisu-maru, the kokuho we have handled, the kokuho of Ikatsushima-shrine and the one with the kijimomo nakago. In the Nihonto Taikan kotohen II there are tracings of three other Tomonari-blades making the total 12. In the Nihonto Zenshu Volume V page 87 there is one more tracing along with the tracings which are also included in Fujishiro's book and the Nihonto Taikan. And lastly I have found a Juyo Bunkazai Tomonari in Shibata's Nihon no Meito page 13, of which there is also a photo in Nihonto Zensu Volume III page 66. That brings a total of 14 Tomonari-blades.

As regards the Ichimonji-sword we have seen in the Ueno National Museum, I have only found a photo of this blade in the Nihon no Bijutsu No.73 (photo No.4). The reason is, I think, that the blade itself is not a Kokuho. The koshirae of this sword is more important. Only the koshirae is designated Kokuho. Mr.Kashima has explained through Mr. Inami that the blade has tachi-koshirae with chain-hangers. When I asked whether it is called Hyogogusari no tachi-koshirae they answered in the affirmative. The sword is known as the Uesugi-sword. Apart from the Nihon no Bijutsu No.73 photos of the very famous koshirae are to be found in Ogasawara's Japanese swords page 12-13, Nihonto Taikan Toshohen pages 58-59, Nihonto Zensu Volume VI frontispiece.

Returning to the Ichimonji-blade, like you I thought the kisaki was an Ikubi kisaki. However, when I asked, Mr. Kashima said it was Kamasu kisaki. Kamasu means barracuda. In the Nihon no Bijutsu No.73 the kisaki of this sword is indeed described as Kamasu-kisaki. On page 108 five types of kisaki are shown: ko-kisaki, chu-kisaki, ikubi-kisaki, kamasu-kisaki and o-kisaki It is interesting that according to the Nihonto Zensu Volume I page 225 a very elongated kisaki is called kamasu-kisaki (although in Volume II page 85 the kisaki of a blade by Tochika of the Futarasan-shrine, which is exactly the same as the kisaki of the Ichimonji-blade of the Uesugi-sword, is called kamasu-kisaki). Shibata in his Nihonto Nyumon page 42 and Iida Kazuo in Hyaken hyakata page 212 do the same. Although referring to other kanji characters, Hawley (II, page 703) defines kamasukado or kamasu-zukuri as "large point with straight edge". The edges of the kisaki illustrated by Shibata and Iida, however, are not straight, neither is the edge of the kisaki called kamasu-kisaki in Nihonto Zenshu Volume I page 225.

Thanks to your account I was able to correct my own notes. According to my notes the Nagamitsu and the Rai Kunimitsu in the Ueno National Museum were both Juyo Bunkazai and the Hiromitsu was a Juyo Bijutsuhin. As regards the Osafune Kanemitsu I have written down that it had no formal designation but can be compared with a Juyo Bunkazai. This blade has extraordinary clear utsuri which can be seen at a glance. It rather looks like a second sugu ha hamon alongside the notare-gunome ha hamon. In most cases utsuri can only be seen by holding the blade towards an open light. In as much as I have remembered it well, I think it is the one illustrated in Nihon no Bijutsu No.73, tracing No.78 and Nihonto Taikan kotohen II page 107.

You were right to mention the clearly visible large kinsuji on the Mondo no sho Masakyo. Mr. Kashima who called it imotsuru, especially drew our attention to it. It seems to be a characteristic in the workmanship of Satsuma-smiths. According to Hawley (II page 701) "imono tsura" means "thick nie hamon line like sweet potato vine".

Personally, I'm very happy to have had an opportunity to see the Tomonari, the Nagamitsu and the Chikakage in the Token Hakubutsukan. Different from the utsuri on the Kanemitsu in the Ueno National Museum the utsuri on these three blades could only be seen by holding the blades towards a light. Thanks to the instructions of Mr. Tanobe Michihiro I now know exactly what utsuri is and how it looks. After years of uncertainty I'm now sure that I have three blades with utsuri in my small collection. The part of the ji between the silvery yakiba and the whitish clouds of the utsuri is an easy landmark because it looks slightly darker than the adjacent whitish area, forming as it were a darkish belt.

Regarding the Hankei shown to us in the Token Hakubutsukan, I was horrified to see the ugly opening of the steel. However, those cracks seem to be a characteristic of his workmanship.

From the old swords now to the modern ones: of the 60 swords on display in the Matsusakaya Department Store the blades made by Japan's Living National Treasure No.1 Miyairi Yukihira (formerly Miyairi Shohei) and by Sumitane Masamine should also be mentioned. The latter can be considered as the highest ranking swordsmith nowadays after Living National Treasure No.2 Gassan Teiichi. I was impressed by the two swords of his on display which showed beautiful choji ha hamon.

Besides the three articles on our trip in English there were also newspaper reports in Japanese. My Japanese friend of 28 years ago who, after Japan's surrender, was second in command of Kido Cutai, a Japanese army unit serving with the British Army in Java (see S. Woodburn Kirby, Official War History, The War against Japan, Volume V page 321 and the second note on page 338) sent me a newspaper clipping of March 29 with a photo in which Mr. Gemmell is seen with Miss Kumori studying one of the modern swords on display.

Lastly, anticipating your account on our visit to Gassan Teiichi I may refer to Token Bijutsu No.151 of August 1969, page 4 for the genealogy of the Gassan smiths.

Gassan Oniōmaru ⟶ Gassan Saburo Sadachika ⟶

Gassan Yahachiro Sadayoshi (Hawley SA 419) ⟶ Gassan Unryushi Sadakazu (Hawley SA 204) ⟶ Gassan Hidetaro Sadakatsu (Hawley SA 201a,b,c) ⟶

Gassan Teiichi (who first signed Gassan Sadamitsu, Hawley SA 244a, and afterwards used the name Gassan Takateru, Hawley TA 272a before adopting the present name).

When Mr. Gassan showed us a blade made by Gassan Sadakazu some of us seemed not to know the relationship between the two. Tracings of the sword with ayasugi hada made by one of Mr. Gassan's forebears from the Muramachi period are to be found in Token Bijutsu No.200 of September 1973, page 31.

I would like to end this letter with expressing, also on behalf of my wife who was the only lady in the group, our gratitude to the leader and all other members for their very fine companionship during the trip.

With kind regards.

GASSAN TEIICHI - TOKEN VISIT - Tony Chapman

The lineage of the Gassan family appears to start somewhere in the mists of time and comes in an unbroken line of brilliant smiths up to the present day.

Gassan Teiichi, formally known as Sadakazu and Noboru, is designated as a Living National Treasure.

His grandfather Sadayoshi was a student of Masahide, His father Sadakazu, after the Haito Rei (Prohibition of carrying swords except by military and police forces) of 1876, was one of the few who carried on the tradition of sword making. He received commissions from the Emperor Meiji and also became a member of the Imperial Art Academy. He specialised in making copies of the early Soshu smiths, such as Masamune, Sadamune, Yukimitsu etc. Many tales are told of his copies that speak so highly of his ability. His son Gassan Teiichi has inherited the ability and skills of his father for he too can produce very good copies of early Soshu style as well as superb Horimone.

The forge and home of Gassan Teiichi is set in the outer hills of the Yamato Plain, overlooked by the sacred Mount Miwa and close to the tumuli of the early Emperors of Japan. Close by, approached through a cedar grove with the crystal clear water of the valley gurgling past, is the Omiwa Shrine. This very famous Shinto shrine has been a popular place of worship for over 2000 years, and here, Gassan gathers his inspirations.

Parts of the shrine were rebuilt by Iyetsuna 4th generation of Tokugawa Shogunate in 1666. Other parts are so old that their age is unknown. The mountain, which is the deity of the shrine, is mentioned in Kojiki and Nihonshoki, the oldest documents in Japanese history.

It was in the midst of these tranquil surroundings that we found the forge. It was a room of the house but with a dirt floor and the forge set against the far wall. The first thing that struck one was the amazing cleanliness - not a bit like a blacksmiths forge. Everyone wore pure white overalls. We were made welcome and settled down to watch the process.

The initial stages had been completed but I will go over them for our newer members.

Firstly Satetsu (Iron sand) is melted down to form slag in the charcoal fire. The slag so produced is called Tamahagane, most smiths buy this from the steel mills but not so Gassan. The lump of slag is divided into two parts - one to make a base plate like shovel called Daikane and the rest broken into small pieces and then piled onto the Daikane which has an iron rod attached to it to form a handle. These pieces are stacked as tightly as possible and the whole is wrapped in rice paper to secure it. Then a watery mixture of clay-charcoal and uchiko is poured over it and it is placed in the charcoal furnace - heated and beaten into a billet. That is where we came in. Gassan tended the fire whilst two hammer men stood by with large

spotlessly clean hammers. The billet was heated to red heat (I was told 1200 -1300 degrees), removed and dipped in a pile of straw ash and placed on the anvil, the hammer men then struck the billet 8 times whilst it was turned from face to face by Gassan. He had a small, about 4 lb. hammer, and appeared to give occasional correcting taps to the billet. From time to time he would stroke the red hot billet with a bundle of straw during the hammering. After a few cycles of this treatment he would then throw water on the anvil and the newly heated billet would be placed upon it. When it was then struck it would literally explode as it threw off all the impurities brought to the surface by the hammering. This was always done when the billet had been elongated by the hammering and was ready to cut and fold. The billet was then placed with half overlapping the anvil and cut almost through with a chisel. Gassan then hammered the end piece over to turn back on itself - taking care that the inside did not touch the side of the anvil. It is then placed in the ash and returned to the fire. This process of beating and folding is repeated about 18 times - but this depends on the type required and of course whether it is the skin steel or the core.

The use of the ash mixture is to improve the quality of the iron and also to evenly distribute the heat during firing.

We then moved to the next room, complete with Tatami, to watch Gassan's son Sadatoshi prepare a sword for its Yakiba.

The blade was held horizontal by means of a large metal staple, let into the top of a block of wood, through which the Nakago was held. Beneath the blade was a small white top table which had 2 different clay mixtures on it. One was of a similar colour to milk chocolate and was used to cover the blade in varying thickness - the other a slate grey colour was used to paint in the yakiba with a bamboo spatula. The grey was of a thicker consistency, presumably with a far higher content of charcoal to allow more heat to penetrate. The operation was extremely artistic and the finished blade looked like a cleverly executed painting. This particular blade had to dry so we could not see it tempered. However, Gassan produced another sword that required tempering and had a coating already set - I suspect it was faulty and that Gassan knew this, for I sincerely hope he did not sacrifice a blade for our benefit, for under the circumstances that is what could have been the only result.

Since there were many of us and he wanted to show how the final tempering was done - he could not darken the forge. This is necessary to determine the exact temperature of the sword from its colour and can only be done with reasonable accuracy in a darkened forge.

A trough about 4 ft. long, 1 ft. wide and as deep was

brought into position by the fire. I did not check the temperature for fear of losing a hand so let it suffice to say it was cold. The blade with clay was placed well into the fire and the bellows vigorously pumped. He removed the sword twice for checking and replaced it for further firing. It probably only took about 5 minutes. The blade was removed - it had a very slight curve on it - and held horizontal over the water. Then it was plunged in and held under the water. The quenching caused the blade to take on a much deeper curve than it had previously. The quench not only controls the yakiba but also the curve - true, this can be corrected - but only slightly.

On this particular blade the firing heat could not have been correct - which is exactly what one would expect under the circumstances - for the temper was no good. He had however shown how it is done.

Outside we were shown the eight stages of a sword in the making. It was quite interesting to note a brand new polished blade - unsigned with three meguki ana and kiri end to nakago (which was brand spanking new). The blade was truly beautiful - in Shoshu style. It would be interesting to see it now.

Next we were shown a tanto - signed Teiichi - with a fantastic horimono of a dragon and the most superb set of chisels - there must have been forty and they looked as delicate as a surgeons kit. The mind boggles at the ability of this man but there is no doubt that the wonderful surroundings are a great help to him to achieve the tranquility of mind that must be required.

While we drank tea and ate cookies Gassan Teiichi presented Sidney Divers, our Group Leader, with a signed memento of our visit. We said farewell to Gassan and his son and four assistants and walked back to the village across the fields to our coach - we had now an appreciation of the great skill it takes to make a great smith and how everything must be right - just right - to achieve that end.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

The July meeting of the Branch was held on Tuesday, July 9th at 7.30 p.m. at the Manchester Club. As the main event was to be a lecture with slides the Club Committee very kindly allowed us to use the "Lancaster Room" for the meeting. This is typical of the generous hospitality that the Manchester Club have shown us over the past year, and it is largely due to the excellent facilities that we have available that the Branch is now so successful.

After the formalities Cliff Bartlem gave his illustrated talk on the recent "To-Ken"Trip to Japan, assisted by a fellow traveller, John Hymas. Cliff had obviously prepared his material very carefully, as he switched from close-up slides of sword-polishing to views from inside the Great Buddha of Kamakura. This resulted in a lecture that held its audience fascinated throughout. Cliff's photography was excellent, especially the difficult shots of sword making in the small, dark room, and together with a witty commentary produced a memorable evening's experience. Thank you, Cliff, for sharing your memories with us.

The September meeting of the Society will be held on Tuesday, September 10th at 7.30 p.m. at the Manchester Club. This will take the form of a members' sword evening. Everyone is asked to bring two swords (or more if you like), with the following theme: the two swords should be the best in your collection and the worst in your collection. It will be quite informal, with no-one being asked to stand up and spout, so bring along that treasure that none of us have seen for years! If everyone brings only two swords that will supply us with forty for the evening.

The November meeting will be the A.G.M. An agenda will be produced so if anyone has any item he wishes to raise, apart from the regular business of election of officers, etc., will he please contact me so that it can be included?

Japanese Exhibition

An exhibition of Japanese Art and Culture is to be held in the Gallery of the Leeds Polytechnic from October 14th to November 8th. Viewing is from 10-5, Monday to Friday. There is to be a section devoted to arms and armour, and it is hoped that this will include specimens from the dusty cellars of Northern museums.

The Battle of Mikata-ga-hara 1572 by S.R. Turnbull

"He who only knows victory and doesn't know defeat will fare badly" (Tokugawa Ieyasu).

If it were every disputed that Tokugawa Ieyasu was one of Japan's greatest generals, it would still be admitted that he was certainly the most successful. He survived sixty years of war, emerging after the most colossal feat of arms in Japanese history as the holder of the highest office under the Emperor, and thus established his family in a position of supreme power which they were to wield for two hundred years. So it is perhaps surprising that I have chosen to illustrate Ieyasu's genius by the Battle of Mikata-ga-hara, which was his only defeat,

The word defeat needs some qualification, as Mikata-ga-hara is recorded in most books as a victory for Ieyasu. But in fact the dawn sortie on a certain cold day in 1572 was a victory, whereas the actual Battle of Mikata-ga-hara the day before had been a sudden and crushing defeat. It is Ieyasu's reaction to this defeat, and his ability to turn it into a victory the following morning, that shows so much better than, say, Sekigahara, the enormous strength of the man.

At Mikata-ga-hara we see a young Ieyasu of twenty-nine. He is still the active samurai general who leads his troops into battle. He was also by now a powerful and respected warlord, allied with and subservient to the sadistic Oda Nobunaga, to whom he rendered service by applying his military talents to the liquidation of rivals.

Among Nobunaga's adversaries was the redoubtable Takeda Shingen, a wolf in priest's clothing. The warrior Archbishop has gone down into history because of a series of indecisive battles he fought with another cleric, Uesugi Kenshin. Nobunaga was not openly at war with Shingen, but such were the deceits of Japanese politics that Nobunaga had an arrangement with Uesugi Kenshin that guaranteed that should Shingen attack either, the other would immediately attack Shingen in the rear. This was an exceedingly practical arrangement, which fitted perfectly the geography of Japan, Shingen and Kenshin being men of the mountains and Nobunaga now a man of the coast.

Takeda Shingen was certainly aware of this "deal", and as the snows began in the winter of 1572 he began to march 20,000 men out of the mountains into the plains of Totomi, en route for Kyoto, relying on the more severe weather further North to keep Kenshin at home. His way ahead to the Capital lay along the Tokaido, the great Eastern Sea Road, which he would join at the town of Hamamatsu. Two years previously a castle had been built there and garrisoned by Tokugawa Ieyasu. It was now to act as Nobunaga's first-line of defence.

Ieyasu had been watching Shingen's movements very carefully by sending out scouting parties. The size of Shingen's army became apparent when a force of three thousand men, whom Ieyasu had sent out on armed reconnaisance under Okubo Tadayo and Honda Tadakatsu, limped home to Hamamatsu after a difficult retreat.

Ieyasu requested help, and Nobunaga was not slow to respond to the needs of his first line of defence. He sent three thousand men under three minor leaders, who began a council of war under the chairmanship of Ieyasu. That these

three were not of Ieyasu's calibre was soon evident, for they advised him to remain on the defensive at Hamamatsu castle. Ieyasu was scornful. "To let an enemy come marching up to your castle without shooting an arrow at him", he replied, "is not to be a man!", and gave orders for the force to march out and intercept Shingen on the road.

This was by no means the simple samurai bravado it appears to be, for Ieyasu was wise enough to realise that, as Shingen's ultimate goal was Kyoto, it was likely that if he was not challenged he would try and by-pass Ieyasu's castle, leaving a token force to invest it.

Ieyasu's army proceeded to a place called Mikata-ga-hara about three quarters of a mile to the North. Ieyasu drew up his forces in what is called the "stork's wing" formation, an advance guard in line with the main body massed at the rear of centre. On the right were Nobunaga's reinforcements, and on their extreme right flank, which rested on the Magome River, were a corps under Sakai Tadatsugu.

Facing them was an immense host whose advance guard alone exceeded in number the entire Tokugawa force. At four o'clock in the afternoon during a steady fall of snow this advance guard launched a simultaneous attack on both flanks of the Tokugawa army. The left held firm, and indeed repulsed the Takeda in some disorder, but the reinforcements from Nobunaga gave way. Two of the three generals fled, while the third fought bravely until he was killed.

As fresh Takeda troops replaced the vanguard Sakai Tadatsugu was left in an exceedingly awkward position. His division was now entirely separated from the rest of the Tokugawa, and as his men began to fight their way back to their comrades they received a fresh assault in flank from Shingen attempting to work his way round to the Tokugawa rear. The snow was still falling steadily, and as it grew dark the Takeda launched a full attack. The Tokugawa army began to fall back, and Ieyasu ordered his famous fan standard to be planted on high ground to the rear as a rallying point. Realising that a retreat back to the castle might soon be necessary Ieyasu determined that the morale of those still in the castle should not deteriorate. Observing that a samurai of his had taken the head of a warrior wearing a monk's head cowl he sent him post haste to Hamamatsu to proclaim the trophy as the head of Shingen. This the knight did, bringing a loud sigh of relief from the watchers at the gate, who fortunately did not realise the deception.

Meanwhile Ieyasu himself was in mortal danger. He and his staff had moved forward to aid a comrade, and was now being

assailed on all sides by arrows and bullets. The captain of the Hamamatsu garrison, with a detachment of men, came galloping to his side, and commenced one of those heroic speeches that are appropriate to such occasions. The gist of what he said was that Ieyasu should think of the future generations of Tokugawas and get the hell out! He added weight to his speech by seizing hold of Ieyasu's bridle and smacking the horse on the rump with his spear. Ieyasu plunged off towards Hamamatsu, flinging enemy soldiers in all directions, some getting so close to him that one of Ieyasu's companions kicked a bow out of the hands of one. Ieyasu himself shot an arrow into one soldier who ran at him with a spear. After this hazardous journey Ieyasu arrived at the castle, and his squire hammered on the gate.

It is at this point that we hear of one of Ieyasu's celebrated demonstrations of "how to keep your head when all about you are losing theirs". He gave orders that the gates were to be left open and flares lighted. This would make it easier for the returning Tokugawa force, while puzzling the Takeda. "To shut the gates", said Ieyasu, "looks as if we are frightened of them". Ieyasu ate a meal, and retired peacefully to bed. It is recorded that he snored most loudly. Perhaps as he rested he recalled a similar narrow escape some years previously. When he returned on that occasion after fighting some warrior monks, he stripped off his armour and two bullets fell out of his shirt!

While Ieyasu slept, his trick worked. The leaders of the Takeda vanguard eyed the open gate with suspicion. They were further impressed by the dead bodies. Without exception the Tokugawa troops had fallen facing the enemy. During the night the Tokugawas maintained a steady pressure on the besiegers, small parties sallying out to shoot down into the Takeda camp. As they were familiar with the terrain they were able to sneak up quite close, and cause apprehension out of all proportion to their number, or the actual execution they performed.

Had Takeda Shingen pressed home his attack it is more than likely that Hamamatsu would have fallen, and with it the entire course of Japanese history would have been changed. But as dawn broke Takeda decided to withdraw to his mountains. His decision was hastened by a fierce sortie from the still open gate of Hamamatsu castle. Having failed to beat Ieyasu decisively he feared a long siege, long enough to give Nobunaga a chance to ally himself properly with Uesugi Kenshin, and thus for Shingen to be threatened on both sides. Vowing to return, Takeda Shingen struck camp and headed off to the North.

And Takeda Shingen did return, but it was to prove his

last move in his violent life. In January 1573 he besieged Noda castle where, the legend tells us, his siege proved very successful. So successful had he been in starving the defenders that they now had no food at all, the only provisions in the castle being a rather large quantity of sake. Not wanting to let this precious brew fall into the hands of their captors, it was agreed to dispose of the liquor in the most appropriate manner. The sound of carousing carried far on the night air, and Shingen himself approached the ramparts that he might hear more clearly the pleasant sound of a flute being played by a sentry. As he reached the wall a soldier, who was obviously less inebriated than the others, took aim, and shot him in the head.

Although not instantly fatal the wound was mortal, and in April 1573 died one of the most powerful figures of the sixteenth century. Shingen had been one of Ieyasu's most formidable enemies, and never again was Ieyasu to know defeat.

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 Alan Bale, 46 West Close, Woodthorpe Road, Ashford, Middlesex 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.

NEW MEMBERS

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