



Sugawara Sensei's Trip to London

Spare a thought for Japanese Shihan: they travel half-way 'round the world to spend a week gazing out over nothing but people dressed in baggy white jimjams in a bare, matted hall. Really, they could stay in Japan if they wanted to do that.

Normally, after a summer school, our guest instructor is flown immediately back to Japan—there's no allocated "holiday" allowance on the schedule, and Hombu sorts the tickets out based strictly on the training dates. It's unthinkable for a Japanese to ask his or her bosses for extra time just for sightseeing. So when we learned that Sugawara Shihan, despite multiple visits to this country, had seen next to nothing of the UK outside of the training venues, we appealed to Hombu to arrange a return date that allowed an extra night in London.

We packed a lot into this extra time and organised an itinerary based on Sugawara Shihan's interests. The following report is a summary of the off-the-mat adventure that we

gave him before he flew back to Tokyo.

The first thrill was the drive down from Harper Adams. Neil Mould, in the dual role of chauffeur and cultural ambassador, dutifully stayed within the national speed limits. Sensei probably didn't realise that he was, therefore, witnessing one of the most remarkable events of his entire trip.

After relieving him of his suitcase at Staines (you don't need keikogi and hakama for sightseeing), we took Sensei into London. We had sandwiches on the green outside the Houses of Parliament, before walking, *ayumi-ashi*, past Horseguards and Downing Street.

We then checked Sensei into his hotel in Pall Mall. Masayo used her famous Jedi ki mind-trick to get an upgrade on his room. We can never know for certain, but it just might be that when Sensei saw his room—it really was impressive—the thought must have entered his mind that the bed alone was bigger

than the matted area of the Harper Adams sports hall. Oh, how he would have loved to stay in there rather than be dragged around London! But we had a schedule, so we didn't let him.

From the hotel, we rode the double-decker bus to Tate Britain at Pimlico. Here Sensei admired the Turners on display. Sensei has a fondness for Turner; must be all that *tenkan*. Roy and Louise (both works of art in themselves, up to a point) joined us in the gallery. From there we went to see St Paul's cathedral, and viewed Tower Bridge from the infamously wobbly Jubilee Bridge.

Next stop was South Kensington, where, after a rendez-vous with Sue, Penny, Neil and Kelly in an authentically crowded London pub, we made our way to the splendid Royal Albert Hall.

We had a box seat booked for Sugawara Sensei at that evening's Prom: the GB Youth Orchestra playing Varèse, Rachmaninov, and Copeland. Sue Smith is the

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Newsletter Article Submission Deadlines

February 09
Deadline - 17th Jan 09

April 09
Deadline - 17th March 09

June 09
Deadline - 17th May 09

August 09
Deadline - 17th July 09

October 09
Deadline - 17th Sept 09

February 09
Deadline - 17th Jan 09

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perfect companion for a cultural event like this, not least because of her work with the Royal Opera and ballet. So she sat with Sensei while the rest of us skulked in the cheap seats further back.

After the concert, we had a meal in London's bustling Chinatown. The food was great, and there was a lot of laughter too as we told stories, drank beer, and demonstrated a wide range of chopstick-handling skills. It was a short walk from there back to Sensei's hotel, and the first busy day was over.

The next morning, Sensei had already taken a constitutional in St James' Park (presumably including stretches and ukemi) by the time we met him at 9am. We ate breakfast just off Trafalgar Square. Over coffee, Sensei demonstrated a talent as a caricaturist; in fact, should we ever need the leverage of blackmail in future dealings with him, we now have his signed cartoon of Kobayashi Shihan's face stored in a safe and secret location.

The morning was spent in the National Gallery, with Sue. Sensei spent a long time admiring the paintings while listening to the

Japanese audio-tour on headphones.

Curiously, offered the choice of dim sum or a great British pub lunch with warm beer, Sensei took the Chinese option. Next stop, via black cab ("I had that Sugawara Shihan in the back of my cab once, gov'nor"), was the British Museum. Here he was able to marvel over all the cultural treasures that we British have so rudely ransacked from those countries which, at some time in their history, have unwisely let their guard down. The mummies and the Rosetta Stone made a particular impression.

Finally, a long tube ride to Heathrow, where, fortunately, a complex plan had come together and Dave was waiting with Sensei's suitcase. Sensei seemed genuinely sorry to be leaving us (either that, or he was sorry that he wasn't to see the fabulous hotel suite again). We waved him off through security and into the loneliness of Heathrow's airside departure lounge.

Sugawara Shihan wrote to us when he had returned to Japan, thanking the UKA for arranging his London trip. He nominated the National Gallery and the concert

at the Albert Hall as the highlights that he had enjoyed the most. He also told us that he had really appreciated spending time unconcerned with work. Many people may not realise that, contrary to their expectations of the glamour of being a teacher at the Aikido World Headquarters, Sugawara Shihan actually spends much of his time dealing with legal and administrative paperwork in the Hombu dojo office.

Footnote:

This little adventure took a lot of organisation well in advance, and was in some large part a response to the hospitality and care that Hombu dojo has extended to our own members when in Japan, especially our own Shihan. In particular, Gordon Jones liaised with Hombu dojo to make the event possible. On-the-ground organisation, including bookings, was Masayo's work. The Staines dojo team (Neil, Kelly, Masayo, Penny, Roy, Louise, Dave) worked hard to make it all run smoothly with transport and logistics. Sue Smith is not only charming company but also the best person to have with you to appreciate the cultural aspects of our capital city. Dave wrote this report. The UKA paid for Sensei's hotel, Proms ticket, and his lunch and dinner.

UKA Aikido Course 19th October 2008. Ren Shin Kan Dojo, 10.00 - 15.30.
See website and club notice boards for details

Cath Davies

Course Secretary

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UKA Courses 2009

18th January | 14th/15th March - Winter School | 14th June
15th - 22nd August - Summer School | 18th October

Mulled Wine and Mine Pies at Wa Shin Kan. 19.30, 22nd December

Gordon Jones Shihan and Peter Brady Shidojin will host this year's practice and remembrance of departed aikido friends.

For more details contact Guy Needler, 01564 822093, guy@washinkan.org.uk, www.washinkan.org.uk

Web Site Updates

To all Club Instructors

Do you want your own club web site?
If so contact:

Mark Machin,
UKA Webmaster:
webmaster@ukaonline.org.uk

This is an example of what is on offer:



Club News

New UKA Club Bedford Aikido Club. Instructor Mark Machin 2nd Dan so Hombu

Class Times

Thursdays
2000 - 2100

Sundays
1700 – 1800

Location

The Bunyan Sports Centre
Mile Road
Bedford
MK42 9TS

For more information

e-mail
markmachin1@yahoo.co.uk

or call
07958 669199.

House News



Te Shin Kai

Chief Instructor – Keith Hayward Sensei 6th Dan so Hombu
Tel 01952 403195 | Email: susan.hayward@sky.com | www.teshinkai.org.uk

Class Schedules

Ken Mon Kan Oakengates Class Times

Monday & Thursday – 7.45 – 8.45pm Juniors 7.45 – 10.00pm Seniors
Friday - 8.00 – 10.00pm
First Friday of every month – Instructors Course – 8.00 – 10.00pm
Second Friday of every month – Weapons Class - 8.00 - 10.00pm



Kyu Shin Kan

Chief Instructor – Peter Brown Sensei 5th Dan so Hombu
Website <http://www.kyushinkan.com/>

Projected Course Dates at Kyu Shin Kan for 2008

Date	Course	Times	Venue
7th December	Instructors	11.00am - 1.30pm	DMU Dojo

Myo Shin Juku

Chief Instructor – Peter Brady Sensei 6th Dan so Hombu
Website <http://www.myoshinjuku.org.uk/>

Date	Course	Times	Venue
7th December	General	10.00am – 12.00pm / 12.30pm – 2.30pm	The Langley Dojo

