

**10th Annual ESC Forum** *Reims, France, November 2014*

## **Towards deep democracy** *An introduction by Pierre Quettier*



And the miracle happens again....

Every time I am asked to coordinate the teaching programme for an ESC Forum, it seems such an unlikely thing; like an egg seeking its hen. We ask participants to enroll in a seminar, the programme of which is not yet known, and after that people seem to knit together somehow. The contacts between them are tied in the mode of *nemawashi*<sup>1</sup>, and then because of the immense goodwill of each person, along with their respect for the others, slowly, slowly, everything weaves together, vertically and horizontally, until « it » happens. And there it is - the Forum - completely different from the previous ones, but nevertheless a "Forum", this original European Shintaido creation.

"Depth and Diversity", great, isn't it?

Diversity is surely the best and worst of things. The best because it springs directly from the creative nature of our humanity, itself the source of our great adaptability. The worst because, coupled with a selfish desire for survival, it moves us away one from another and contributes so powerfully to the large and small disorders that afflict us.

Depth "and" diversity, diversity "and" depth. Without depth, diversity puts us at risk of superficial consumerism and without diversity, depth exposes us to fundamentalism. It is therefore in the "and" that the solution lies, in the "excluded middle" as Aristotle called it.

And that's exactly what the practice of Shintaido aims at : the body "and" the mind, the partner "and" me, me / us "and" nature. Neither of the two terms alone can ever contain the whole truth by themselves, but the « and » in the middle does.

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In Japanese culture, the concept of “human being” is composed of two characters, nin, meaning “person” or “being”, and gen meaning “between.” Humanity thus lies in the middle and this « middle » has to be worked at; it is not a doing of nature, but of culture.

It is the many versions of “what is in the middle”, of the ma, that make up the program of study in the various Japanese « Do » or ways, each in their own fashion. Shintaido for its part, has reconsidered the eternal dilemma, and found solutions in the « terminology » and through the “kata” of the martial arts - not simply for an insular society but for a global one.

At a deep level, it seems to me that this original work of the Shintaido keiko is successful, and perfectly suited to our post-modern information society; in fact, it is a little more successful each day. In its time Shintaido was revolutionary, but society is daily “catching up” to the vision; doesn’t the world look more and more like a vast Wakame-taiso or collective Eiko-dai-kumite ?

Our work now is to adapt (to develop) the « middle » between the deep, authentic Shintaido of our practices “and” the circumstances of the societies in which we live day to day. It is also our job and our pleasure, to facilitate the meeting of the various “true Shintaidos”. What kind of depth, what kind of authenticity, do we need to make society, out of our diversity ? What means do we need to adapt diversity in depth, and depth in diversity ?

The Forum, in its very structure, proposes an answer to these questions. The Forum follows directly from the last ten years of work and pleasure shared between the Technical Committee and the European faculty, at the same time it actualises them for everyone in one place.

Along with you, I hope, that the diversity of European Shintaido teaching presented at this “10 years Forum” will allow us to reach together that ineffable space where the meaning of words ends and where “wings of perception” are deployed; that space we come from, that we dream of and in the pursuit of which, we shall continue to build our European Shintaido.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nemawashi (根回し) in Japanese means an informal process of quietly laying the foundation for some proposed change or project, by talking to the people concerned, gathering support and feedback, and so forth. It is considered an important element in any major change, before any formal steps are taken, and successful nemawashi enables changes to be carried out with the consent of all sides.*

*Nemawashi literally translates as “going around the roots”, from 根 (ne, root) and 回す (mawasu, to go around [something]). Its original meaning was literal: digging around the roots of a tree, to prepare it for a transplant (from Wikipedia)*

## The Tenth Annual ESC Forum Report

by Charles Burns

The annual ESC (European Shintaido College) Forum is a unique event in the Shintaido calendar. So many things happen at once that no one can really get an overview of the whole event. This report is thus necessarily partial and should be read in conjunction with what others may write.

Forums are organised by the ETC (European Technical Committee) which doubles as a kind of informal ESC Board. It consists of all ESC members who are Senior Instructors (third dan) or above. I have been a member of this vibrant but chaotic inner circle for the last two years, since passing a bojutsu exam in 2012.

Among the ETC I find myself in the unique position of being one of only three native-English speakers, on a committee which insists on conducting all its business in English. This results in my having a

grandstand view of a stream of minor (and a few not-so-minor) miscommunications occurring on a continual basis. Sadly my native Englishness is no defence against becoming embroiled in these miscommunications myself. Involvement with any kind of committee business is a constant uphill battle to work out what on earth is going on! Much of the time I fail miserably and find myself longing for the relative sanity and order of a British Shintaido AGM...

My role in organising this event was that of exam coordinator. I initially approached this with some confidence since it's a role I'm familiar with and would have easily fulfilled in the UK. However as the event approached my confidence slowly evaporated; it became increasingly clear I had only understood a fraction of what the role actually involved and what was being expected of me. Every decision I made was countermanded by another. All the preparation I had time to do was never enough. Eventually I found myself approaching the event - at which exams were the first thing in the timetable - with a feeling of mounting dread, convinced they were all going to go horribly wrong and that I would be to blame.

I need not have worried. At every Forum I've attended over the last ten years I've been struck by the freshness and enthusiasm of European Shintaido practitioners. Exam dojo preparation is made easy by two enthusiastic and capable helpers who appear out of nowhere exactly when I need them. Sensei care for the examiners is a simple matter of asking for volunteers: a forest of hands go up, far more than are needed. The dysfunctionalities of the ETC seem to melt away in the face of actual Shintaido practice.

The exams come and go in a blur of activity and excitement, taking on their own momentum in the process. I am exam gorei-sha, so have a unique view of unfolding events. I lead the candidates into the dojo then stand back and watched their keiko. The bulk of the examinees are a group of eight Shintaido assistants, all taking their graduate exams and all hoping to one day become an instructor in their own right. At any Forum these people are the most important of all, they are the future of Shintaido.

Afterwards, leaving the breakdown of the exam dojo in the capable hands of my helpers, I and all the ETC are whisked away to an exam deliberation room to deliberate on the results. The process of deliberation is as follows:

- First of all an anonymous vote is taken. Those qualified in each subject mark "yes", "no" or "maybe" against the candidate's names. The Shintaido sei-shihans vote for the Shintaido candidates while the bojutsu san-dans vote for the bojutsu candidates. This vote quickly establishes who has passed, or failed, and who will need debate to arrive at an outcome.
- Next, each candidate's performance is discussed in turn by the whole group. For those with a clear result the discussion is about feedback: points which could be improved for those who passed and points of encouragement for those who failed. Those without a clear result take longer, the feedback going both for and against. Sometimes a consensus emerges quite quickly, sometimes not. The discussions are candid and occasionally others are summoned to help (eg: the candidate's instructor) but do not end until all are in agreement.
- Finally a review of all the feedback is conducted and the list of results is checked and double-checked to prevent errors.



For me this discussion shows the ETC at it's best: deeply immersed in the world of keiko, with authoritative and sometimes deeply-moving insights from everybody there. It is conducted in an atmosphere of respect and love, the gravity of the outcome being felt by all.

After some hours deliberations come to an end. The exams being over I finally get the chance to visit the tea corner and find out who else is here! Some people have only just arrived and are still in the process of hugging and kissing rarely-seen friends from all over Europe and a few from beyond.

The reason Forums are different to other gasshukus is that there is no obvious leader, nor is it entirely clear who the students are. After a single opening plenary keiko all the attendees are free to choose whether they wish to teach, share or learn from others (although it soon becomes clear that these processes are not so different). This is facilitated by a system called "offers and demands". Before the gasshuku attendees can make requests (demands) for the kind of keiko they wish to study, as well as proposals (offers) for keiko they wish to teach or share with others. As both lists grow people will offer to teach subjects others have requested, as well as sign up for keiko which others are proposing. In this way a structure of keiko-on-offer gradually becomes clear. Some keiko are free (sharing or collegial-style keiko) while others (usually taught by qualified instructors) require a small fee, usually €10 - €20. Past Forums were only open to those at assistant level or above, however this year's - being the tenth-anniversary event - is open to all.

The so-called tea corner is all important; here are displayed the sign-up sheets for the keiko on offer. Although many have planned their keiko on-line before the event, many more have not. I am one of those who has not! A few are still proposing new keiko, pinning up sheets wherever there seems a possible gap. I have offered to teach a bojutsu keiko based on kaze-no kata. Looking at the sheet I can see three people have so far signed up for it, which means I will earn €45 (less a 10% ESC 'tax') yippee! I decide to spend it by signing up for Ito sensei's tenshinken keiko.

For some of the sessions I elect not to sign up for anything at all. This is partly because, after a long summer plagued by recurring ill health, I am not certain how my body will cope with too much keiko. I am also curious



just to observe the unfolding of the Forum around me. In the end I spend much of my time wandering from group to group, leaning on my jo and watching the way others are leading and following. Occasionally people call me over to take part in some demonstration or other (particularly if sticks are involved) while at other times I become immersed in my own hitori-geiko, allowing myself to be buffeted by the sounds of keiko flowing in from all around.

The days of the Forum are filled with keiko and the evenings with meetings. On the first evening are exam results and the College AGM, while on the second is a party. To me, this event has a slightly imbalanced feeling. The venue is a huge and well-equipped municipal sports centre - such as can only be found in France - complete with the biggest dedicated tatami dojo I have ever seen. Although the facilities are excellent the downside is that many other groups are using the centre at the same time. The canteen and corridors are full of noisy and energetic young people here for fencing lessons, tennis and other activities. The tea corner, meeting and party rooms are scattered in unlikely places throughout the building, so we find ourselves coming together and dispersing again throughout the gasshuku. Despite this everything seems to happen as it should with innumerable French helpers making sure the canteen works for us and that we all know where to go. At the party on the final evening Ula and Clélie celebrate ten years of the ESC with a wonderful resumé of previous events.

As always, I am sad to leave. I approached this event nervous and frustrated, thinking that here in the UK we could teach the Europeans a thing or two about event organisation. I leave with the understanding that the Europeans have much to teach us about the joy of spontaneous volunteering for whatever needs doing. ■



## Closing Thoughts

by Fugaku Ito

I was very humbled to receive so many words of gratitude and praise at the Forum closing ceremony. However, I realized that event organizers should have received the words of gratitude – all those who smoothly did their assigned roles behind the scenes, the ESC staff who created the new Forum-style gasshuku, and the group that gathered in Coye La Foret and started to dream 10 years ago!

Praise and gratitude should also go to Minagawa sensei, who led the last plenary keiko and assisted me throughout the Forum and in the instructors' workshop.



There's a saying by Saicho who founded the Tendai sect of Buddhism:

*What are a nation's treasures?  
True riches are one's faith in Buddha (道心 /Doushin)  
and those who call it so (who have Doushin)  
from times long ago it's been said  
that true riches are not material things  
but that which shines light into a dark corner (一隅を照らす / Ichigu-wo-terasu)*

In the Shintaido movement, our treasures are the instructors and their assistants who hold Shintaido classes in their communities, spending their free time after a day's work, teaching Shintaido to make "your body bright" and "your heart strong!" This poem by Kenji Miyazawa, a poet and children's literature author, from the beginning of Showa period (1920's) expresses the way I see the role of those instructors and assistants in Shintaido.

*Ame nimo Makezu — Not bowed by the rain*

*Not bowed by the rain  
Not bent by the wind  
Not crushed by the snow or summer's heat  
With a strong body  
Not bound by desire  
Never losing temper  
Always quietly smiling  
Every day four bowls of brown rice  
Miso and some vegetables to eat  
In everything  
Count yourself last and put others before you  
Watching listening understanding  
And never forgetting  
In the shade of pine woods near the fields  
in a little thatched hut  
If there is a sick child to the east  
Going and nursing her  
If there is a tired mother to the west  
Going and shouldering her sheaf of rice  
If there is someone near death to the south  
Going and saying there's no need to be afraid  
If there is a quarrel or a lawsuit to the north  
Going and telling them to let go of this waste of time  
When there's drought, shedding tears of sympathy  
Worrying with the farmers when the summer is too cool  
Called a nobody by everyone  
Without being praised  
Without being blamed  
Such a person  
I want to become.*

## Japan 400 Plymouth

by Nagako Cooper



This year, 2014, is a very special year for Anglo-Japanese relations. The little-known tale of John Saris, Captain of *The Clove*, and his journey four hundred years ago is an epic one. He set sail for Japan in 1611 with a commission from King James I to establish formal relations with the Shogun. Successfully, he returned in 1614, landing in Plymouth on 27th September with gifts and a Vermillion seal letter from the Shogun, Ieyasu Tokugawa to King James I, which granted the English permission to live and trade throughout Japan.

“Japan 400 Plymouth” was initiated out of Plymouth University to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Anglo-Japanese relations. This event provided a rich variety of programmes from Japanese art and culture to cuisine. Last year Minagawa sensei and Pam were contacted by Adam, who used to practice Shintaido in the 80’s and now teaches choreography in the Performing Arts programme at Plymouth University. He asked them for a Shintaido demonstration and also to give an introductory workshop at this event. I was invited to be part of this project.

Prior to the event, we got together to brainstorm what to present at the demonstration and began to formulate a programme, which was revised and refined several times through rehearsing till it was finalised. It was a great learning opportunity for me to witness and also be part of this creative process.

In the early hours of the 27th September, after having a final rehearsal in the living room at Minagawa family’s house the previous night, we left Bristol before the sunrise. Through the early morning mist, Pam drove us safely to Plymouth.

It was a beautiful Saturday morning in Plymouth with a fresh sea breeze blowing in the air. On our way to the Barbican where the demonstration took place, the town was rather quiet and we started to wonder if there would be anyone coming to see our demonstration. Just then, we came across a group of Japanese ladies. Minagawa sensei frankly began a conversation and discovered that one of the ladies who was a potter living in Dartmoor had known a Shintaido Instructor in Japan who was also a potter living in Mashiko! Through this conversational kumite, the ladies started to show their interest in Shintaido and in the end they all promised to come and see the demonstration.



Here I have to confess that I must have missed a sign pointing to Barbican and a turning at this point in spite of the fact that I had a map in my hand, ended up causing us all to walk at least an extra mile till finally we found our way to Sutton Harbour just 30 minutes before the time for the demonstration!

To our surprise, the harbour was buzzing with lots of people, and the stage was set right in the middle of the harbour where the home coming of *The Clove* would be taking place later that afternoon, recreating the scene which had occurred exactly 400 years ago on this day! There, Adam and his Japanese wife, Tamayo, with their 3 beautiful children greeted us. Before we did the last minute stage rehearsal, Minagawa sensei cleansed the stage with his sword, which helped me to feel safe to perform and also helped to calm my nerves.

The demonstration was opened with Pam's introduction of Shintaido, explaining its origin and history briefly as well as the uniqueness of Shintaido. By this time the stage was surrounded with quite a large audience and I could see still more people were coming to see what was happening on the stage. After the introduction, I started to do Tenshin goso "Cycle of Life" both sei & expansive dai form. While I was performing this, my mind had the overwrapping image of the epic journey of *The Clove* sailing to the Far East and completing the return cycle of journey. Pam and I performed Tenshin goso Kumite together following this.

Then we moved on to Bo-jutsu kihon (basic) contrasting with open hands Toitsu kihon movements, performed next to each other, followed by a graceful Bojutsu 2 dan kata (form) "Sakugawa" performed by Pam. Minagawa sensei appeared at this stage to perform 4 hon kumibo and Soei kumibo with Pam, which have dynamic movements with corresponding images such as "Big Lightening", "Crashing Waves", "Ascending to the sky" and to the final rather delicate image of "Peeling back petals".

The last section of the demonstration was Kenjutsu/ Sword techniques and Tenshin goso applications. Under the Master's gorei, I performed Kyu kajo, the 9 fundamental sword techniques. Minagawa sensei and I then did Kyukajo Kunitachi sword applications followed by free Kunitachi.

Then we put our swords aside, and Pam and I attacked Minagawa sensei first with grabbing his wrist, then with tsuki (punching) and finally with Uchite (open hands striking) attack. This was done as completely free style, where Minagawa sensei gracefully received with various Tenshin goso applications.

Finally Minagawa sensei took his genuine Samurai sword out, and did some fundamental movements, Diamond eight and Shoden no kata, which is the latest sword form based upon Tenshingoso application sword movements. Through this final performance, I felt stillness and a sense of peace filling the space around.

Looking back, I realise that all the preparation and rehearsals supported me tremendously on the stage. I was really grateful for Minagawa sensei and Pam's support and advice all the way through.

After spending a free afternoon to enjoy the event, (by this time the rest of my family had arrived in Plymouth) and taking a walk in the famous Hoe gardens with the view of the harbour and Drake Island in the distance, we had a final discussion to prepare for the workshop the next day.

Minagawa sensei shared his 2 methods on how to introduce Shintaido at a workshop. In both methods, he explained the importance of introducing the essence or purpose of our practice, possibly touching the history of Shintaido, how it was developed, etc. briefly. Then one method would be to introduce all the 3 fundamental techniques, which are Tenshin goso, Eiko and Wakame or Hikari, whereas the other method is to focus on only one of the 3 fundamentals. Having asked Pam and myself for ideas on how we should approach a group of performing arts students who would be attending the workshop, he shared his teaching plans, which were very carefully thought through, and at the same time keeping flexibility with several options to choose from depending on the group of participants.

On Sunday morning, Adam met us at the workshop venue, - a brand new performing arts studio in Plymouth University. Our Shintaido workshop was to be the first ever activity to be held in this new space. When I

stepped into this studio, I sensed a special atmosphere as if I were in a Japanese Budo-jo (martial art hall). Minagawa sensei spontaneously performed a cleansing ceremony with his sword, facing to each of the 4 directions in the space. He then asked me to do Tenshingoso afterwards. Gradually participants who were mostly Adam's students on the Performing Arts programme started to arrive.

We formed a circle and introduced ourselves by speaking our names, then the rest of the group greeting us back "Konnichiwa (Hello) \_\_\_\_\_ san!" This broke the ice. Then Minagawa sensei explained the purpose of our practice, using the Japanese expression, "There are no enemies." One way to achieve this would be "To kill all enemies" – which is the way of combat, "Hei – Hou" (兵法). And he suggested that there is another way to achieve this condition, that is "to make friends with everyone" – the way of peace, "Hei-Hou" (平法), a word with the same pronunciation as the above, but with a different character! He left it open saying that it is up to each of us to decide which way we choose.

After the dynamic and joyful warm up including flying boomerang by jumping up in the air, Minagawa sensei introduced Samurai Walk, transformed Kaikyaku dai movement, opening chest and arms using voice "Ha, Ha, Ha!" stepping forward and backwards. Then in pairs facing each other, they explored the Ma "space between", Kokyu "breathing", and Hyoshi "rhythm" with their partners. It was lovely to see these young people get straight into this new movements without any hesitation!

Then we showed basic cutting movements with a sword and the participants practiced Toitsu kihan cutting movements with open hands. Minagawa sensei praised them all when they did Chudan Kiriharai (middle level pulling cut) with Fudo dachi stepping so well.

We moved onto Chudan tsuki (middle level thrust) starting with one count one thrust, and gradually one count to 2 thrusts, 3 thrusts, then even 1 count 10 thrusts with Kiai voice in the end. By this time, they all looked energised and they were ready to do hall length running tsuki with voice "Eh --- i!" several times.





At this point, Minagawa sensei explained the history of Karate development, how punching with a fist has transformed to open hands through pursuing the most effective technique in Karate. It also gave participants time to catch their breath while listening.

The next moment, hall length Eiko using “open hands” were introduced which they all did naturally, and took another step of demonstrating Eiko dai in pairs, running /circling the whole studio with full power! It was very moving to watch their Eiko running. I felt that this brand new dojo was filled with life, light and love.

After a short break, Tenshingoso “Cycle of Life” was introduced and Minagawa sensei explained that this fundamental form contains the essence of martial arts, expression arts and healing arts. Then the students first focused on learning movements by watching and coping. After that, the sound “A, E, I, O. U” was introduced while they were watching the movements demonstrated. Finally, they combined the movements and sounds together, which I found was a very effective way of introducing Tenshingoso.

Finally, Minagawa sensei asked the students if they wanted to practice the advanced technique, which all said “Yes!” to. He then introduced the history of Wakame (seaweed) exercise, how it had been developed from Renko practice, (attacking by thrusting & receiving continuously), transformed to non-confrontational, soft, fluid and meditative movement.

The students did this exercise beautifully, and they looked calmed down, grounded and centred at the end.

In the closing circle, we all said our names again, then the rest of the group replying back “\_\_\_\_san, Arigatou. (Thank you)” this time, and they shared their feedback. Some of which were;

- \* Enjoyed & would like to do it again.
- \* Felt energised and relaxed at the same time.
- \* Enjoyed using voice and movements.

After the events, we realised that British Shintaido had its 40th anniversary last year, which is exactly 10 % of 400 years of Anglo-Japanese relations! That actually felt like quite a significant achievement. I believe that through this first important ground work, Shintaido has been rooted deeper and deeper into the British soil and now BS is ready for the next stage of the development, growing towards the sky, spreading our branches which will bring blossoms in spring. ■

## Shintaido on the Gower *Keiko Report*

by Ula Chambers



The Gower has been a special place for British Shintaido practitioners since the early 1980s. The beauty and expanse of the landscape for those of us who lead city lives, is a true health giving tonic.

When we add the practice of Shintaido to this amazing place, a kind of alchemy happens...however we arrive - tired, jaded, unwell or lacklustre; we depart - transformed, enlivened, cleansed and blessed.

The theme of this event was enjoying the harmony of the elements. As if by demand, the weather remained unusually warm and dry throughout the weekend, encouraging us to put ourselves fully into the practice.

On the first morning, following a welcoming warm up by Matt Vandre, Katrina Horne Sensei, led the first keiko with a theme of Tenshingoso. She explained it was the perfect place to study the rhythm of the sea as a local species of sandpiper is in residence on the beach on the Gower, and has been seen in recent times. We first stepped back and forth following the waves doing Tenshingoso two handed, one handed on either side and then as if holding a bokuto. Gradually we moved to exploring this theme with partners in kumite, like the ebb and flow of the birds and the breaking waves. The keiko was concluded with a very deep and moving 5 minute Tenshingoso, one minute per movement, arranged in a circle facing out towards and including nature.

After a wonderful lunch conceived by Jo and Paul Hofman and prepared by the participants we made the transition from campsite to beach via the steep path down through the woods and dunes. Always a delight, and often a challenge, the walk to the beach is a kind of preparation for our keiko - giving us a chance to slow our step, notice our body and emerge into the dunes with the huge blue sky above us like an ever present "Ah".

Andrew Stones led our warming up and stretching and the afternoon practice followed. We moved from Tenshingoso to various cuts doing the "diamond kata" free hand: Tsuki, and then a combinations of kirihara cuts. We paid particular attention to the transition between the cuts so that there was a continuous flow of energy building up, to be released in the final kirioroshi. As we made our cuts we followed the lines of nature: cutting along and through the sea's edge, the sky the dunes, and then sand. This was followed by kumite using the cuts to release tension in our partner through wakame. We gradually built up into a bigger group, doing the diamond kata all together. Little by little we began to move across the beach together with Ula leading initially, cutting and turning. Then different people took the lead, one from the other, as we turned and moved as a flock, a murmuration of white clad people.

The evening brought us a tasty dinner followed by a wonderful bonfire on the dunes and under the stars. Andrew led us into Tenshingoso. Then asked us to write three deeply held desires for ourselves, our community and the world on scraps of paper and then we recapitulated Tenshingosos as a ritual: recalling our desires we were able to imagine (Ah), manifest (Eh), work through (Ee) and then offer (Oh) our ideal, and then let it go (um).

And so to bed mat and sleeping bag, with the sound of owls and the occasional bats as stewards to our sleeping.

The glorious dawn arrived with sun and warmth! We gathered in the nearby field for our morning Taimyo. Ula explained that today the mediation would be led by three people, one for each part, like a music ensemble. There would be a longer, quiet space in between the parts for unifying our movement and breath, like the space between the movements of a string quartet. Matt led part one, a pause, Andrew part two, a pause and then a deeping and extended 10 part meditation within part three, led by Katrina.

Soon we were enjoying a happy breakfast kumite, all seated on a large groundsheet in the open air. There was passing of muesli, toast and a variety of jams, yoghurts and fruits. A feast to start the day: mokuso, itadakemasu, thank you very much!

Belinda's happy warming up brought us into the perfect condition to start our final keiko led by Ula. We were reminded of the joy of jumping, or jumping for joy. Ideal on the not yet soft sand, individual tachi jump, in pairs and in a snake. Then with a partner, side by side Tenshingoso, in order to feel each others voice and breath, and to move together in a conjoined cycle of life, reminding us that we are interdependent.

Following from this we practiced kiriharai cuts in pairs – jodan, chudan, gedan versus daijodan- stepping in towards our partner one step, and then separating. Then stepping backwards in sagari, whilst the daijodan partner moved through, turned and began the next cut. Finally we returned to the daimond kata using bokuto – finishing as a flock moving and cutting into and through the nature all around us.

There had of course been the traditional post keiko swim in the sea, the water initially cold, soon felt warm on our skin as we dipped and rose with the swell of the waves, practising receiving the energy of the sea.

The gasshuku brought us friendship, laughter and a real sense of community. Added to that the rejuvenation of being in nature and practising together. We all agreed that in 2015 we would like to mark Shintadio in the Gower in a special way and hope to visit and do keiko on the spectacular beach of Rhossilli Bay. I strongly recommend this experience to all Shintaido practitioners, and hope to see many of you under the big blue Welsh sky. ■





## Gower 2014 *Enjoying the Harmony of the Elements*

by Andrew Stones

**UM:** 'Um' was the place....the Earth....and... What a place!! The beach adjacent to Nicholastan campsite is wonderful! I don't even know its name, but it's very magical....it felt like the place itself was holding us, willing us, supporting us...to have a great time. And the magic of the walk down to the beach!! Like a magical faerie trail...winding it's way alongside a trickling brook through the forest.... an enclave of woodland nestling in a tiny valley...the trees....the spirits....the woodland enclave like a beautiful symbol of the feminine....divine nourishing yin essence....cleansing and healing us as we made our way towards the beach....emerging soon onto the dunes and the beach itself....the bright expanse...glorious sunshine....bright bright essence of uplifting yang, to lift us in our practise....the harmony of the elements already present in the magic of the place as it held us...

**O:** 'O' was Jo and Paul who provided the food. 'O' is all-encompassing grand generosity; not leaving anyone out; providing for all, nourishing all. It was a great pleasure to meet Jo and Paul. They have been stalwarts of Shintaido for many years. Veterans of many conflicts (I imagine!) and equally many joys. There's something magical about Jo and Paul. They hold the energy of a grand forest. A deep strength and fortitude, and the magnificent and firm generosity that emerges from that forest, that knows that the Earth is its essence and home; and that knows its own strength, and its delight. Deep bow to you two treasures of British Shintaido...

**I:** 'I' was the leaders; Ula and Katrina (who led the training), and me-a-tiny-bit (the campfire). 'I' is the essence of leadership (according to Aoki Sensei). It takes balls (metaphorically) to be a good leader. You have to be slightly belligerent. Shintaido is so intricate, and there are so many possible variations and possible ways one could practise. It can be quite confusing! So it takes a bit of bottle to stand up there and say "OK! For better or worse.....THIS is what we're going to do....and THIS is how we're going to do it!.....so sue me!" You have to be ready to lead the charge....to head up the cavalry. Ula and Katrina did magnificent jobs. Good creative keikos. A good balance of challenge and ease, and lovely to practise all that sword work....And I was pleased with how the campfire process went.

**E:** 'E' was all of us; all of us that participated, and even those that helped the organisation but couldn't attend (Peter) – your participation greatly valued. 'E' is creating the space....sorting out the organisation....getting there....problem solving...., putting up the tents....creating the space. 'E' is the fundamental mandala (sacred pattern) that is drawn in the sand. The space that is laid out. We were each of us, deities on that mandala; each an essential part of the sacred design. It was lovely to meet and practise with all of you.

**A:** 'A' was the charge to take all clothes off and run naked down the half mile to the beach...in front of all onlookers....spearheaded this year by....Viv! Viv for me was the spirit of 'A' in this gashuku! 'A' is "exploding into being".... "exploding into birth"....even wearing nothing but... one's birthday suit! Thanks Viv, for honouring our unabashed naturalness, and leading the ancient Shintaido tradition of streaking...

Over the past decade, I've attended a good many Shintaido events. There was always something I learned, something useful and fruitful I picked up from each event I attended. And at the same time, it has always seemed a bit bitty; it's felt as if I've been trying to piece Shintaido together for myself like a curious jigsaw puzzle. Fascinating, enthralling, and yet somehow a little frustrating...as if thinking to myself... "All this wonderful stuff must surely all fit together... somehow!" This weekend at the Gower it seemed to all fall into place. Somehow, at a deep level of my being, I felt it.... "This is Shintaido!"

Thanks to everyone who made this possible!

Let's do it again next year!



## Two Master's Classes with Minagawa Sensei *March 30th and June 22nd*

by Susan Lacroix

There follow some impressions of these two wonderful days offered by Minagawa sensei, Masashi, but I am sure there is much that is omitted, either because I do not remember it, in which case I hope others will add to what is written here; or because perhaps it has been absorbed in the body or somewhere where words are not.

The theme of these two days was Fueki Ryukou, translated as 'the eternal unchanging essence and the search for freshness, transience'. This comes from a haiku by Basho, whose writings share with Masashi's teaching the qualities of directness, profundity and playfulness. Although there was practice of many aspects of shintaido and technique naturally was part of this, there was also a more inward quality, and I was reminded of the advice to 'follow and look where the finger is pointing not at the one who points it.' I felt that we were asked to be more present and attentive, and therefore to search more from ourselves. Many gems were thrown quite casually into explanations, such as a reference to Basho's famous haiku \* about the sound of the splash made by the frog which Masashi related to the duality of our world and to a connection with Oneness as a result of experiencing that sound. Some of these insights probably need to grow as seeds do, which may be a very slow process.

### **Meditation**

Both days began with seated meditation in silence, with a hand position or mudra. This was as in taimyo, with hands a thin paper's width apart and thumbs just touching. It is difficult to maintain this contact and compels one both to experience one's inattention when it is lost as well as searching for the quality of attention which sustains the position. We could also have hands as in Un or resting on the legs or knees. In zazen people would face a wall for their sitting practice, with eyes half open or open.

There was some discussion of temptations like listening to traffic or dreaming, and the movement towards unification of whatever one sees, or hears, both one point of focus and everything else as well. I took this to mean the focus of intention and the inclusion of any distractions within this focus so there is no distinction in the end.

### **Tenshinjuso-ho**

Warm up was practiced on chairs on the first day, very useful when one is unable to stand, or is working with weak or infirm people. On the second day, particular attention was paid to the quality of warm up, as a form of meditation in itself, and aspects of toitsu or integration of body and mind. As most of us keep tension in the upper body, specifically the shoulders, the importance of letting energy release down the body became clear. The tapping of the feet at the end of warm up was taken from meditative walking practice by Aoki sensei, and enables us not only to release tension into the earth, incorporating the aspect of cleansing, but to bring energy upwards into the body from the earth. The four stages of integration, development, cleansing, and finally freedom, were described.

### **Tenshingosho**

On day one we studied Tenshingosho kumite, two handed and one handed, which was particularly rewarding. We opened into Ah and studied Oh, and going up and into the other person's centre with the offering implicit in this movement. Also we saw again how important it is to really cut in order to open the space for the other. Masashi stressed the grounding hand and when each person did kumite with him, one by one, the importance of that grounding became very clear. Each of us revealed something very fundamental upon which Masashi commented. This could be trying too hard, not being present enough in the body, losing one's own awareness and boundaries, sinking into one's own Un but with no connection with the other, being too ungrounded, or too soft. I had to see yet again the whole story of my apprehension at having to show myself and my practice, and how everything rushes forward out of myself. The consequences of this were gently but profoundly made clear to me by Masashi in that kumite.

On the second day we began to practice tenshingosho in pairs as slowly as possible. It took maybe ten minutes

or more to complete one cycle of tenshingoso and Masashi suggested strongly that we consider studying one movement or part of it, staying with that part for a long time, in our personal practice. Some people do this daily for up to an hour, studying the same movement for weeks or months. Yet even if one physically holds any position, opening is continuing as the movement in tenshingoso is continuous.

Other points were that there are at least 10- 12 movements in tenshingoso. The hands should really open, and the whole should come from the koshi which provides stability: a tree needs to have good roots to grow high towards heaven. At the end of Ah one raises even higher in tenso before starting Eh, an apparently 'small' point which affects the whole greatly.

### Taimyo

On day one we had practiced the two breathing exercises hoten kokyūho and hokushin kokyūho which come at the end of Taimyo; and then Taimyo part one with stepping, especially hangetsu, keeping the feet neither too wide nor too far, close to the ground like skating. On day two we concentrated much more on the ten position meditation form, in particular kongo-i, diamond. Reaching higher, the hands together, one brings them down through the centre to arrive in the posture of diamond. Some people thought diamond meant cutting through precisely, as in cutting through illusions etc; others thought of many facets; one pointedness; the form created by the arms and the body. Masashi suggested there was no correct interpretation but it was for each one to find his or her own image. Although there was a focus on one point it was possible also to experience energy as coming from and in all directions so the gaze might be as though on a candle flame but it could also encompass everything. In fact it is a form of shoko. Masashi tested if our arms were too floppy or rigid, as we searched for sufficient tension to hold them but simultaneous relaxation.

### Offering Flowers, kenkai-in hoko

In March when we worked on Offering Flowers, we were asked to be aware of stepping forward into the unknown as we did so. This is a very difficult exercise but doing it together with everyone else, a certain rhythm appeared which helped support our individual stepping.

When we practiced this on June 22nd, we were outside and this made a difference as we could step far across the field into what seemed to become an immense space. Masashi again explained the stepping, with its count of 4, though we were not to focus only on the feet but to allow the flow of movement, 'just energy'. He further reminded us to look far into the distance, and above all not to let the flowers we were offering drop. In the past this was practiced by monks and nuns and the offering was to the temple or the altar within it. In the rakutenkai times people actually carried a bowl of water which would be refilled if it spilled. For me, someone who lacks a good sense of balance, this practice remains extremely demanding, every step requiring a fresh effort, the slightly uneven surface serving as a continual reminder. Someone commented that in this searching for balance there was a constant question, can I do it? He felt he was on the edge, which was where Aoki sensei wished people to be, in keiko at least, and which created an opportunity for letting go of any rising emotions.



This and kongo-i were exercises in will, how to go through difficulty in life.

I had the impression of each step forward being into the passing time of yesterday, today and tomorrow, while at every moment there could be a juncture with Now, a vertical axis or energy. For a few days afterwards this awareness continued to resonate. This was also a sort of encouragement that despite lack of expertise, something profound could be glimpsed by moments.

### **Renki, Wakame, Rolling, Kiri-oroshi and Tenshingoso applications**

On day one we practiced renki, and were asked to have the concept of the other person's centre in mind. Then we worked with wakame. The latter began with an exercise of Ito sensei's, gathering the past from behind, bringing it to the present with a sort of tsuki, then sending it forward into the future.

Outside on the grass Masashi showed us how to drop into rolling, literally with the arms and hands, practicing in pairs. Using tenshingoso arrangements, with Ah and Eh, then Oh you will send the other person backwards not sideways, so we had the chance to play with this. It is important to enter the koshi of the other person so when B approaches A, B is not passive but actively seeking to go into the centre of A, their world and their koshi, otherwise it will be too superficial to work, since there is no contact or understanding.

Again everyone had the opportunity to experience kumite with Masashi.

After some dai jodan kihon also with kirioroshi we continued building on the work of the daienhsu with cutting from tenso through the centre of the other person in such a way that they would inevitably fall down. The centre is not a straight line through the other person as of course nobody's body is just a vertical line, but this left me with the question of what is the centre actually, not just as a form, but energetically. Masashi stressed that one should not go down too soon, thus avoiding receiving the cut but wait till it was really felt. Once the person is down, one uses Ah and Eh and knee walking or extending the leg to help move forward and past them.

This was working with receiving, and experiencing that giving and receiving, following and leading eventually become the same.

Working in threes in tenshingoso kumite, we found that as the receiver at different moments there were opportunities to bring the others together naturally. There was a strong feeling of harmony in this arrangement, which made me feel close to my fellow practitioners.

An exercise beginning what could become hikari followed, standing and using Eh and Ee, and Masashi demonstrated how to move the whole body when receiving, not just the hips as in 'slinky dancing...'

As Charles was presenting his next dan karate exam soon he asked to practice tsuki from several people at once. He used kayak and tenshingoso applications as well as wakame, and without hands, using just the koshi to receive. This was very interesting to watch as well as to participate in, and personally I had something of a revelation about tsuki after having the opportunity to do so many of them at once! We then had the further enjoyment of Charles' practice of three katas, two of which he had to select for the exam.

A very pleasing and enriching aspect of both days was the sharing we had. Apart from the circle at the beginning and end of each day, on the first day, which was round about Masashi's birthday, we all had a cake together, while on the second day we sat outside for lunch and on the grass. This followed on from or fed into the kumite. It was particularly enjoyable to see faces new or rarely glimpsed in this part of the country.

At the end of the days, which passed far too quickly, I felt that whatever our age, ability and condition, the possibilities offered by shintaido are pretty much limitless, and I left feeling grateful and inspired by what we received from each other and the depth and generosity of Masashi's teaching. ■

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\*In Japanese this haiku reads  
Furu ike ya      Old pond!  
kawazu tobikomu      frog jumps in  
mizu no oto      water's sound

# BS Kangeiko and AGM Douai Abbey

3rd & 4th of January 2015

天真剣

**Tenshin-ken**

Bright body and strong heart.

The Kangeiko  
will be led by  
**Masashi Minagawa**  
& BS Instructors.

White Cottages,  
Douai Abbey,  
Upper Woolhampton,  
Berks, RG7 8TQ.



# British Shintaido Examination Report

## BS & Guest examiners:

Masashi Minagawa

Charles Burns

Local Examinations took place at Reading and Bath. Congratulations to all those who took part.

Here are the results.

### Shintaido

Viv Rimmer

Paul Buck

Nymon-ka

Chuto-ka

### Bojutsu

Susan Lacroix

Laurent Lacroix

3 kyu

3 kyu

## The Shintaido Calendar 2015. Now available to order

The Shintaido Calendar 2015.

View at [http://youtu.be/6jBQ\\_0bfD3Q](http://youtu.be/6jBQ_0bfD3Q)

A4, Spiral bound at the top edge with (the video is not a representation of the quality of the photos)  
£9 each (price held for the last 3years)

Available to order now and collect at the Kangeiko in Reading, or posted to you for £2 within the UK to arrive by or after Christmas (please say if you want it before)  
Postage abroad is available.

Profits to Brighton Shintaido.

Contact Charlotte to order [photos4shintaido.co.uk](mailto:photos4shintaido.co.uk) or  
[blue4dolphin@googlemail.com](mailto:blue4dolphin@googlemail.com)



**Shintaido Calendar 2015**

Osaminu, Reading, May, 2014

## Programme, Contacts & Classes

### 2015 Programme

See [www.shintaido.co.uk](http://www.shintaido.co.uk) for further details

3-4 Jan 2015

BS Kangeiko at Douai Abbey, near Reading

29-31 May 2015

Daienshu at Douai Abbey, near Reading

Contact: Charles Burns - [charles@shintaido.co.uk](mailto:charles@shintaido.co.uk)

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### Regular Classes

Classes led by current BS instructors or assistants. Shintaido classes and their venues may change, so please check before attending an unfamiliar class

<b>Monday</b>	Reading, St Barnabas Church Hall	1.00 - 3.00pm	Bojutsu
	Ramsgate, Contact Geoff Warr.	evenings	Shintaido or Tai Chi
<b>Tuesday</b>	Bath, University of Bath.	8.00 - 9.30pm	Bath Bojutsu Club
<b>Wednesday</b>	Bristol, Dancespace, Bridewell Street	7.45 - 9.15pm	Shintaido
<b>Thursday</b>	Bristol, Greenway Centre.	10.30 - 11.30am	Shintaido for people with Learning Difficulties
	Stroud, Old Town Hall	10.30 - 11.30am	Gentle Shintaido
	Brighton, The Manor Gym, BN2 5EA	8.00 - 10.00pm	Shintaido
<b>Friday</b>	Eastington Community Centre, Glos	1.45 - 3.45pm	'Lightwaves' Class
	Reading, Clayfield Copse playing fields	7.30 - 8.30am	Shintaido/Bo tutorial

### Weekends

Specialist classes with any BS Instructor. Available by appointment.

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Taimyo Next Issue - Spring/Summer 2015. Thank you to all who contributed articles. Please send further articles, pictures and ideas to [newsletter@shintaido.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@shintaido.co.uk)