

The Budo Masters

武道



The Memories of Henry Ellis Sensei - 1957 - 2007

In the past 50 years I have been most fortunate to not only meet but study with many of the great Budo Masters who have visited the UK and Europe. I would like to place my memories on record in the hope that they may one day be of interest to others in the Martial Arts.



Kenshiro Abbe Sensei 1915 - 1985: I began my Martial arts journey in 1956 at the now famous Hut Dojo. I started with Judo under the instruction of Ken Williams Sensei. Abbe Sensei had arrived in the UK in 1955 at the invitation of the London Judo Society (LJS) . He would soon become disillusioned with the LJS and join forces with Matsutarō Otani Sensei which would eventually lead to the formation of the British Judo Council (BJC) - British Kendo Council (BKC)

British Aikido Council (BAC). Williams Sensei was there with Abbe Sensei at the very beginning of this exciting period in British Martial Arts history. The new association with Otani Sensei would make Abbe Sensei a regular

visitor to the **Hut Dojo**. Which would soon be renamed The Abbe School of Budo. I first saw Abbe Sensei when he attended a grading at the Hut. I realised even on this first occasion that I was in the presence of someone very special. Abbe Sensei appeared to me to be an awesome man . I would later get to know sensei much better and engage in some conversation although his English was very poor. Many people today claim to have been friends of Abbe Sensei, I never met one person who was a friend of Sensei, we were all



privileged students. I would soon start Aikido and would see Sensei on both the Aikido and Judo classes. I also became a regular at Abbe Sensei's own Sandwich Street Dojo in Kings Cross . London.

At this time Abbe Sensei was in his early 40's and still a force to be dealt with in randori or competition. I was not at the LJS when the following happened, Sensei thought that he did not receive the respect due to a man of his lineage and stature, he lined up all the 31 Judo dan grades and walked along the line and told them individually what technique he would use on them and whether it would be right or left handed, he did exactly that, he went down the

whole line and beat each and every dan grade .

One day when we the students were all in the dojo changing room and Abbe Sensei was also changing, he was standing there talking to the students whilst stripped to the waist, although in his 40's he looked very fit.



All the young guys around him were also very fit with big shoulders with the usual narrowing to the waist, not so with Abbe Sensei, there seemed to be a vertical line from his hips to his shoulders, his body was almost box shaped like a fridge and there was the appearance of a very powerful man.

I later became the personal assistant to Williams Sensei and I would be asked to visit the Otani home in Stuart Road Acton, London, where Abbe Sensei had his own rooms. My visits would be for various reasons and sometimes to take Sensei to the airport or a seminar. Derek Eastman and I became regular visitors as we had become good friends with Tomio Otani Sensei. It was on one of these visits that I knocked on Sensei's door and he called for me to come in, as I entered I was surprised to see several wild birds in the room, there were Pigeons - Sparrows - a Blackbird and a Robin, there were more birds out on the window sill, the birds seemed totally at ease and were not even disturbed by my entrance, usually with wild birds the slightest noise or movement and they are gone, I have always liked wild birds and was fortunate to see this on several occasions.

On another occasion when I went to see Abbe Sensei, as I entered his room he was watching The World Series Cricket, although I have always been an athlete and sports mad, I really did dislike Cricket, I would rather watch grass grow. I was not best pleased to see the man that I admired so much watching Cricket, I politely asked "Sensei, you like cricket?" he replied "NO!! STUPID GAME!! I watch every day to try to understand stupid game, never understand, they call World Series, not world, only countries that have been colonised by the British Empire" Very profound.....

Kenshiro Abbe Sensei was 8th dan Judo - 6th dan Kendo - 6th dan Aikido - 6th dan Kyudo - 6th dan Karate .

To see Abbe Sensei demonstrate any of the aforementioned arts was always a great experience. There is one incident that I will never forget, It took place at the BJC Championships at the Town Hall Acton, London in the early 1960's, Abbe Sensei and Tomio Otani the BKC National Coach came on stage to demonstrate sword technique, Derek Eastman and I were sitting in the front row as the swordsmen faced each other, after a couple of techniques Abbe Sensei made a flashing cut to Tomio's head, I swear that Tomio never blinked as I and the audience thought that Sensei had made a fatal mistake as the blade appeared to make contact with Tomio's forehead, Tomio never flinched as a large piece of his thick black fringe fell to the floor. Back in the changing room I asked him had he been afraid, he replied " Why should I be afraid, I am with my teacher "..... That is probably one of the most amazing things I have ever witnessed in the Martial Arts.

Kenshiro Abbe Sensei as I have previously stated was a powerful and awesome man in presence and appearance on and off the tatami (mat). I assure you that it was far more awesome to be on the receiving end of his technique, you always knew that with any technique you were totally under Abbe Sensei's control yet he seemed to do it so effortlessly . Abbe Sensei's Judo was now become legendary, his Aikido was very tight and direct, Judoka who do

Aikido like to use body contact in their technique, Abbe Sensei never did any of the wide flowing movements that we see in modern Aikido. I have never experienced that feeling of total power with any other teacher.



Tadashi Abe Sensei. 1926 - 1984..

Tadashi Abe Sensei was a small and totally positive man. We hear from time to time that a Japanese teacher should have been born in the Samurai era, If I ever met such a man it was Abe Sensei. During the second world war he completed training to pilot a one man suicide torpedo, before he was called to die for his country the war ended, It was something he would regret for the whole of his life, he felt he had been cheated out of his destiny . He was a direct student of Morihei Ueshiba from the 1940's and a great exponent of Traditional Aikido. After several years in France he returned to Japan. And in 1967 visited the AikiKai Hombu dojo, he was very upset at the aikido that he now observed being taught there. He watched the class for a while before standing up and drawing attention to himself , when he had every ones attention, he spoke out loudly " I apologise to all the ladies present, this is not Aikido this is for women " he then placed his Hombu Aikido Diploma's on the mat and walked out. Abe Sensei said that to fight a man with just fists is no real challenge at all, but a fight with your bare hands against a man with a knife was a true challenge, I understand that he often carried a knife and when challenged he would offer this to his opponent saying " please this is for you ".



Matsutaro Otani Sensei. 1901 - 1977 (?)

I did not study with Otani Sensei although I did meet and speak with him many times when visiting Abbe Sensei or his son Tomio. Sensei was a very small man of about 5ft 2ins who had left Japan I believe at the age of 20 yrs. I am told that someone insulted his father and he had challenged the man with a sword, his father did not appreciate this and Sensei had to leave home for a while. He boarded a ship going " anywhere " and worked his way around the world until he reached Britain. He had studied martial arts and met with the famous teacher Yukio Tani from that point he lead a life of Budo. He was a 7th dan in Judo and he would take on anyone including wrestlers, once on the ground it was impossible to hold him, his opponent would think he had a hold and the next thing Sensei would `sneak` from under him and choke them out. Whereas most Japanese would seem to have an austere appearance forbidding you to get close to them, not so with Otani Sensei, he always seemed happy with a ready smile and at ease with himself and all around him. He was known affectionately by most as " Smiler " with my upbringing I could not bring myself to call him that. I was asked by Abbe Sensei to demonstrate Aikido at the National BJC Championships at the BBC Lime Grove venue London. I was backstage waiting to be called on stage with Derek Eastman, just a few yards away from me was Otani Sensei and the then Japanese Ambassador to the UK, both in conversation, whilst they were talking a Judoka walked past and called to Otani Sensei " Hi Smiler " and walked into the changing rooms, I must be honest and admit that I was furious at this flagrant display of disrespect in front of the Ambassador. I followed the Judoka who I did not know into the changing room, I told him what I thought of his disrespect, he in turn was very explicit in his thoughts about me.

I gave him a little slap which unfortunately ended his participation in the event. I in turn took my anger just a few minutes later onto the stage where Derek and I gave a very hard Aikido demonstration. Lady Baden Powell who was sitting in the front row was heard to say to Abbe Sensei that our demonstration was the most terrible demonstration of violence she had ever witnessed.

On the other hand the Japanese Ambassador came up to me and said that it was the best display of Aikido he had ever seen.

~~~~~



**Tomio Otani Sensei: 1939 - 1991 National Coach to the British Kendo Council** :

was quite a character and good company to be with. I always remember as we travelled with Tomio on the London Underground between Acton and Abbe Sensei's dojo in Sandwich Street, Kings Cross, as the train rattled and rolled through the tunnels we would all compete to see who could keep their balance the longest before grabbing the safety straps. Tomio always won.... Derek and I studied Kendo with Tomio and he in turn would study Aikido, to my knowledge Tomio never took a grading in Aikido. I am surprised when I see people who claim to have been graded in Aikido by Tomio Otani ??? . Derek Eastman and I would go to Tomio's Kendo classes in

Acton, Tomio was so fast that when we had competition, he would hit you several times with the shinai while you were thinking about hitting him. One night Derek was having some serious practice with Tomio, he was very determined to beat

him just the one time, Derek was wearing full Kendo body armour, Tomio hit Derek on the head with a shinai (bamboo sword) to Shomen (centre of head) Derek just collapsed and was out for the count. Derek said when he had recovered that it felt as if he was not wearing his Men (head guard) he also said that it felt as if he had been clubbed, I agreed with Derek that we both never realised that you could knock someone out with a Shinai, well its true, Derek felt it and I saw it happen.

~~~~~



Masahilo Mikoto Nakazono Sensei: 1918-1994 .8th dan Aikido. 6th dan Judo. 6th dan Kendo.

Nakazono Sensei was sent to Europe by O Sensei Morihei Ueshiba in 1962 He was the European and North African AikiKai representative. Sensei came to the UK at the invitation of Kenshiro Abbe Sensei. Nakazono Sensei was a very hard teacher and very demanding, he was to become one of the favourite of all the Japanese teachers by all the Hut dan grades, he is still remembered with respect and affection today. Nakazono Sensei made his first visit to the UK and the Hut Dojo in 1963. We were all advised that Abbe Sensei had asked Nakazono Sensei to regrade all the 8 Hut Dan grades to meet with the modern day standards of the Hombu HQ.

After the grading one second dan was demoted to first dan, Sensei said to him " Necessary sell your gi while prices are high " non of us could understand the reason for this as he was one of the best dan grades at the Hut , he became very disillusioned and left after a few months, maybe the reason was that he was too young ?. Sensei did say that we all could go to the Aikikai and practice on equal terms with the best there.

As we got to know Sensei better I asked sensei if I were to aske, would he give me a letter to visit the Hombu Dojo ? He looked at me and asked " Why " , I thought that my request did not need an explanation, so I tried to say that I would like to study there. Nakazono Sensei said " There are no good teachers left at the Hombu Dojo, they are all teaching in the West."

Nakazono Sensei attended the Grange Farm Summer School 1963. I thought we trained hard at the Hut Dojo, It was nothing compared to what we went through with Nakazono Sensie. In a way the problems were ours, we taught and trained hard, Abbe Sensei had told us not to ` go ` for sensei as that would show disrespect. Sensei did not see it like that at all , his impression was that we were ` all ` testing him. Abbe Sensie allowed this to go on for a full week before explaining to Nakazono Sensei. I am sure that from then on he had a lot of respect for us. One day I was invited to punch sensei, I thought I had cleverly pulled my punch as I did not want to hurt him, he was very angry, I think he had now had enough, he told me to hit him 100%, I did, I finished up with my head up the chimney of a large old English fireplace with my gi covered in soot, of course the other dan grades found this most amusing.

~~~~~



#### **Masahilo Nakazono Sensei.**

There are so many stories of Nakazono Sensei many of which I have told in other articles. The one thing that we learned very quicly was that he was a most powerful and talented master of Aikido. In the Hut Dojo there were many tough guys who were either Bouncers or market traders. At the Grange Farm Summer School there was one guy in particular who was not so sure about the real power of Sensie, his name was Morris. In the pub that night he turned to Big Tony who was the biggest and strongest guy on the course and said " Tony, I think you are all submitting yourselves out of respect rather than the power of the technique, I don't believe he could take you Tony if you did not want to go down ? " Tony laughed at Morris and said " Look here Morris! I know what I feel and I am not stupid enough to try to resist Sensei Nakazono, NOW ! if you want to try ? then feel free to try " ..

The next morning Nakazono was teaching and he was looking for a big guy, for whatever reason he ignord big Tony and picked on Morris, everyone was aware of Morris's feelings as Nakazono Sensei took him in Sankyo, true to his own stupidity Morris totally resisted and amidst the scream from Morris was the sound of all the bones in his right hand breaking, there was no sympathy for Morris as he was taken to hospital. It was also the end of the course for Morris. I have always said that the best teachers of Aikido come from a Judo background as Kenshiro Abbe did, Nakazono sensei was a Judo 6th dan from the Kodokan.



### **Masamichi Noro Sensei**

Noro Sensei visited the UK in 1964 as a 5th dan. He was young and very amiable with very dynamic flowing Aikido, we had never seen this kind of Aikido with large circular movement. This was very different from what we had seen with the older teachers. Noro Sensei was to make several visits to the UK and we in turn visited his dojo in Paris, where Derek Eastman was to receive his second dan from Noro Sensei in 1964 on one such visit. Noro Sensei was not as unapproachable as many of the older teachers and had a good sense of humour. We now had both Noro and Nakazono visiting the Hut at separate times, Nakazono Sensei would teach us his technique and Noro would teach his style, as each one visited they would both ask the same question " Why are you doing this way !!! " I did not teach you this ", we did not have the heart to tell one that we were doing the other teachers style. I was on stage in 1963 at The Royal Albert Hall with both Noro and Nakazono Sensei, Nakazono Sensei used Noro in a knife attack, as he immobilised Noro and took the knife from him and raised the knife above his body as if to finish his opponent off, for some reason this made Noro very angry and said it was wrong to do this to another high grade, It should be said that Nakazono was much senior to Noro Sensei. I liked Noro Sensei very much but found it difficult to change to such flowing movement, I did much prefer the style of Abbe Sensei and Nakazono Sensei. Whilst Noro's style was very nice to watch, I found the technique of Abbe and Nakazono to be effective on the mat and you knew it would also be effective in the street, his was something I was never really sure of with the flowing style of Noro Sensei.

~~~~~



Mutsusuke Harada Sensei

I first met Harada Sensei when he arrived at the Hut Dojo with Kenshiro Abbe Sensei in 1963. It was agreed that he could immediately start Karate classes at the Hut Dojo. Initially the classes were small so Derek Eastman and I joined in the training. Harada also liked the Aikido that he saw at the Hut dojo and would add some Aikido movements to his Karate. Harada Sensei had been graded to 5th dan in 1957 by the great teacher Ginshin Funakoshi Sensei. 50 years later he is still 5th dan, stating that any grade above 5th dan is ` totally pointless `. In a time when the grades in the Martial Arts are being devalued this was a refreshing statement to both Henry Ellis and Derek Eastman who agreed with this line of thought and they made the highest grade possible in the ESTA 5th dan. I have known Harada Sensei continually from 1963 and met with him again recently at the TK Chiba 40 Celebration in Oct 2006 where we were both guests of Chiba Sensei at the event dinner.

~~~~~

### **H Kobayashi Sensei: Osaka Hombu.**

I have a copy of a letter sent to Kenshiro Abbe Sensei by Kisshomaru Ueshiba in 1966 advising him of the findings of a visit by the official Hombu representative for the UK and Europe Mr H Kobayashi of the Osaka Hombu. The Aikikai were surprised at the rapid growth of Aikido in the West. On his tour Kobayashi Sensei had visited the Hut Dojo with Abbe Sensei.

We had never met the man before and as he stepped on the tatami he never smiled or gave the slightest indication that he was pleased to be there. He seemed to sit there stony faced for what then appeared to be a lifetime, as I sat there and aged with legs that now belonged somewhere else, Koybayashi spoke, It was difficult to understand and to be honest I really don't think we were much wiser for the visit. He looked to be a very hard man. He was now standing and indicating for one of the Hut dan grades to attack him with a bokken, at the Hut one would never attack half heartedly, and with the look of this Sensei it had better be positive. I am sure he did not expect such a strong attack and he was hit on the head, whereas most men would have fell to the mat, not so with Kobayashi Sensei, he looked angry and I can assure the reader that from that point on he never made another mistake. We never saw him again.....

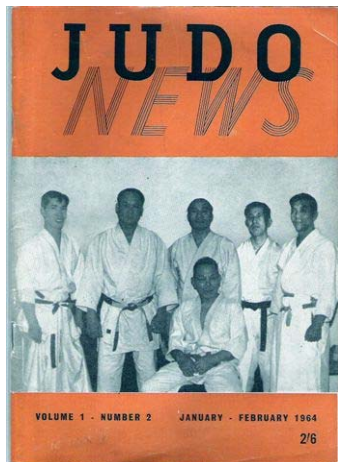
~~~~~



Haku Michigami Sensei 9th dan Judoka born 1912

Michigami Sensei visited the Grange Farm Summer School in around 1963 and took part in the BJC National Championships at the Royal Albert Hall in London. He was a friend of Abbe Sensei and had also trained at the Busen College. He spent most of his teaching career in Bordeaux France. He trained the greatest ever western Judoka Anton Geesink who went on to win the gold medal in the 1964 Olympics in Japan. I met this legendary Judoka but did not study with him. He seemed to be a good friend to Abbe Sensei as they talked, I am sure they spoke of the `old days` just as we all do.

~~~~~



### **Judo News Magazine 1964 price 2/6p .( 32p)**

The photo on the front cover of the magazine is of all the Japanese Masters who participated in the BJC National Championships 1963 at the Royal Albert Hall, London. Left to right: **M Noro - H Michigami - K Abbe - M Harada - M Nakazono. Sitting M Otani Sensei.** I was uke to both M Nakazono Sensei and M Noro Sensei on one of the greatest days in my martial art career. I have written of all these teachers in this article. This is a rare photo to see so many Japanese teachers together at one time.

~~~~~

Shohei Hamano Sensei 9th dan Kodokan Judo

I saw Hamano Sensei when he visited the Grange Farm Summer School. He had graded Abbe Sensei to 3rd dan so many years ago. He was senior to Abbe Sensei in age and grade and influence, yet we were all surprised how he seemed to treat Abbe Sensei as if he were the more senior. I have little to write of seeing this great Judoka but it was a pleasure to see him and Abbe Sensei together. We had all been informed that this great teacher would be arriving on this particular day.

No one had ever met a 9th dan before. I am not sure what we were really expecting, whatever it was it created a great deal of excitement throughout the summer camp. There was a strange incident during the class that morning with Nakazono Sensei. As Nakazono Sensei was teaching someone kept poking their head through the door and in an excited loud whisper would call to the class " He's just arrived " and a few minutes later the door would open and we would get another loud whispered update. Nakazono Sensei was getting a little agitated by this and had his back to the door when it opened and the whisperer called out that they were just coming into the building. Nakazono Sensei did not look round at this last update. He was still standing with his back to the door when in walked Kenshiro Abbe Sensei and Shohei Hamano Sensei. Nakazono Sensei did not look round immediately, we were all tempted to tell him who had just walked in, we decided to stay mute. It now seemed such a long time since Abbe Sensei walked in, yet I am sure it was only seconds when Nakazono Sensei clapped and turned, kneeling, he then bowed. He appeared to bow only to Abbe Sensei, perhaps we were all mistaken.

~~~~~



### **TK Chiba Shihan.**

I have documented the history of the arrival in 1966 of Chiba Sensei to the UK in several articles to date. I will for the benefit of this article add the more relevant points. Kenshiro Abbe Sensei had returned to Japan for the 1964 Olympics where his good friend Michigami Sensei would win the heavy weight gold with his star student Anton Geesink. Abbe Sensei took the opportunity to visit OSensei Morihei Ueshiba where he discussed the possibility of OSensei sending a permanent Aikikai representative to the UK, to which they agreed. Unfortunately this had never been discussed with Ken Williams Sensei and the dan grades at the Hut Dojo. Williams Sensei was the first student of Aikido for Kenshiro Abbe Sensei and the first in the UK. He had worked hard from that time to build Aikido from absolutely nothing to what it had now become some ten years later. Now Abbe Sensei advises William Sensei that a young teacher was on his way from the Hombu to take control of Aikido in the UK. This situation was a shock to K Williams and the Hut dan grades. Now, it was one thing to have different Japanese teachers visit, but to have one permanently based in the UK was something else.

One can only imagine the situation at the Hut Dojo as Abbe Sensei arrived with Chiba Sensei who was then a 5th dan. So we were not looking at and welcoming a visiting teacher, we were looking at one that was here to stay, not only stay but take control of all BAC UK Aikido. This situation was not the making of Chiba Sensei, I am sure that he had no idea what was waiting for him. He did not receive a warm welcome, simply a mixed reaction from all concerned. To be honest Sensei Williams did try to make the best of this situation. Unfortunately he and Chiba Sensei did not get along. It was obvious that this was never going to work out. Kenshiro Abbe gave the BAC control to Chiba Sensei. It was also a time of undecided loyalties in British Aikido as the instructors around the UK decided which way to ukemi, some were loyal to Ken Williams and some wanted a regular Japanese teacher. I later left the Hut Dojo and joined Chiba Sensei

I was his assistant and we did a BBC world radio broadcast together for 30 minutes. We later did a demonstration on Granada TV. It was a new adventure for me. I had left the Hut Dojo as I was unhappy with some recent events that I did not agree with, the main issue was the issuing of honory dan grades, these were issued as there were only eight Aikido dan grades in the whole of the UK and all were in the Hut Dojo. It was decided ( not by me ) probably between K Williams and Abbe Sensei that we needed a dan grade in central areas of the UK, I would agree with that. Aikido had progressed because of the high standard of the Hut dan grades, I tried to explain to Sensei Williams that if we had people that were not of the standard of the Hut dan grades it would make a mockery of Aikido.

~~~~~

Nobuyoshi Tamura Shihan:

I first met Tamura Sensei when he visited the Hut Dojo in the mid 60's. He was quite an amazing aikidoist with a very pleasant nature. I never saw the hard side to him as I had seen in so many other teachers. His Aikido was very strong but his movement was most impressive. 9

When he did Suwariwaza (Kneeling technique) he could move faster on his knees than I could on my feet. One day after Suwariwaza I asked Tamura Sensei " Sensei can I lift the bottom of your hakama up ? " he gave me a very quizzical look and asked " Why ! " I answered " I have never seen anyone move like you Sensei on their knees, I am sure you have wheels under your hakama " he laughed and quiet happily showed that there were no wheels.



Left: Tamura Sensei & Ichimura Sensei 1968. I took them both on a tour of London on a wet day with them wear just a pair of zori's.



I trained with Tamura Sensei several times, but the best was to come when he and Ichimura Sensei attended the Bracknell Summer School in 1968. This event was organised by TK Chiba Shihan. This was a fantastic week with the following Sensei's Chiba - Tamura - Ichimura - Tada. I had all these teachers at my home and it was summer time and the weather was hot. My wife had cooked a meal for them all and instead of sitting at the table they all went outside and sat on the front lawn chatting and eating, my neighbours were fascinated to see all these Japanese gentlemen sitting in a circle in front of my house.

~~~~~

**H Tada Sensei :**

Tada Sensei with Henry(Harry)Ellis at the National Summer School Course at Bracknell Sports Centre 1968

Tada Sensei was a very high ranking Karate teacher before joining OSensei at the Hombu Dojo. Personally I saw and felt that added strength in his technique. As the senior UK Akidoist at the Bracknell Summer School I would often be uke to him, in the adjacent photo I am sure he is cleaning the tatami with me. Tada Sensei was a little older than the other teachers and more serious, whereas the others were young and even made the usually serious Chiba Sensei seem almost jovial. Tada Sensei was the Hombu representative for Italy. After the week at Bracknell I never did meet him again.

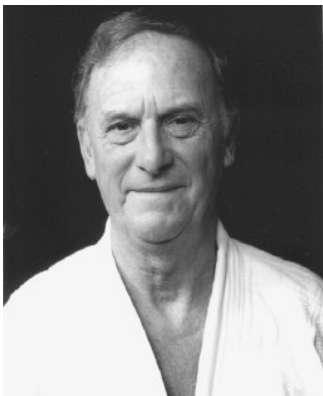
~~~~~

**Tochikazu Ichimura Sensei :born 1941 : See also photo above with Tamura Sensei.**

I met Ichimura Sensei at the Bracknell Summer School, we were very close in age, I was a second dan at that time.

Ichimura was a 4th dan. I am uncertain of Chiba Sensei's motives but he would make me work out with Isshamura Sensei, I think he wanted to see his student and assistant against a young Japanese teacher. I thought that I would get hammered by this young 4th dan. I believe that I truly held my own and I did not feel at all phased by this young Japanese. I think he knew what was going on , we had a good feeling about this for the rest of the course.

~~~~~

**Ken Williams Sensei: The first UK student for Aikido.**

Williams Sensei was the first Aikido student of Kenshiro Abbe Sensei in 1955. He later became the National Coach for Aikido and the BAC. He was a third dan in Judo and he was well known on the Judo circuit, this would be important in the future promotion of Aikido. I often see where people attempt to divide Aikido and Judo. It should be noted that Williams Sensei himself was also a Judoka, and many of the early converts were dan grades in Judo. I cannot imagine anyone else other than Williams Sensei at that time who could have taken on the challenge and maintained the build up of the steam train that was Aikido across the country . Its progress from nothing was quite dramatic and Aikido will always owe a great deal to K Williams Sensei. Sadly we live in an age where our proud Aikido history and lineage is not appreciated. So perhaps by documenting these events there may be a future generation that will .

Williams Sensei had as I have said before a very natural talent for Aikido and I would say he was the inspiration that made the Hut Dojo so internationally famous.

At the grand grade of 3rd kyu I became assistant to Williams Sensei, It was tough but I progressed very quickly. There is no doubt that those early years of Aikido at the Hut Dojo were very special, and still are.

There are only four of the original dan grades still teaching – K Williams – H Foster – H Ellis – D Eastman. Sadly time has taken its toll on many of the other teachers.

~~~~~



William `Bill` Woods Sensei

This documented article and my memories would not be complete without adding a well deserved credit to Bill Woods Sensei. Bill was a small man in stature, but a giant of British Martial Arts. I believe, and have stated in other articles that Bill Woods probably had more influence on the development of Martial Arts in the UK than any other Englishman.

When Bill met Abbe Sensei he was already a 3rd dan with the LJS and a Judo Champion. He would leave the LJS and join with Abbe Sensei. He became the secretary of the BJC – BKC – BAC – BKC. These organisation at one point reached some 35,000 members world wide with his guidance. He was the first graded Kendo student of Kenshiro Abbe Sensei with certificate number one and Tomio Otani number two. This photo in 2003 shows Bill centre with Derek Eastman on his left and Henry Ellis on his right. I saw Bill again at the Kenshiro Abbe Memorial Celebration in May of 2005 where he made a supreme effort despite his serious illness to be there to pay his respects to his teacher. Sadly this was the last time I would see my old friend as he passed away just a few months later. He will never be forgotten.

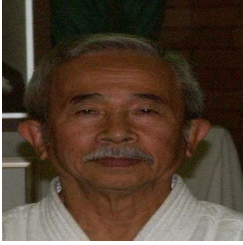
~~~~~

### **Jiro Nakazono Sensei**



It was a great personal pleasure and honour for me to teach alongside Jiro Nakazono Sensei the son of one of my most respected teachers the great Masahilo Nakazono 45 years earlier. We were both at the celebration Memorial event in Neath Wales “ Masahilo Nakazono Memorial Aikido Event “. I spent some quality time with Jiro Nakazono where we spoke of his father and his influence on Aikido in Europe and in particular the UK

~~~~~



Dang Phong Sensei

I was also privileged to teach alongside Phong Sensei at the “ Masahilo Nakazono Memorial Aikido Event “. Phong Sensii had travelled from California USA to attend this event to the memory of his teacher. I found Phong Sensei to be a most remarkable man. His personal history along with his impeccable lineage makes one wish they could spend a great deal of time with him just listening to the stories he has to tell. His Aikido is very traditional and powerful.



Henry Ellis Sensei:

Henry Ellis started Judo in 1956. In 1957 after seeing Kenshiro Abbe demonstrate Aikido with Williams Sensei he joined the small Aikido class, he still continued with his Judo classes for another year before deciding to concentrate fully on Aikido. He became the first assistant of K Williams Sensei and he was also a direct student of Kenshiro Abbe Sensei. After leaving the Hut and joining with TK Chiba Shihan he was to become assistant to Chiba Sensei from 1967 - 1970.

The Ellis Schools of Traditional Aikido (ESTA) was officially formed in 1962 by Derek Eastman Sensei who asked me if he could name the organisation in my name, I agreed and effectively joined my own organisation. making it one of the first Aikido organisations in the UK. The ESTA were members of the MAC and founder members of the British Aikido Board (BAB). Along with other member associations it was hoped to create an organisation fit for the members of the UK Aikido community. In the year 2000 the ESTA decided that the BAB was not fit for purpose and the ESTA resigned.

The ESTA is a small organisation, not by circumstance but by design. The ESTA has a small group of dojo's in the UK with dojo's in the USA. The dojo's are located in Dallas Texas and Alamogordo New Mexico.

Henry Ellis recalls being invited to a seminar which he accepted. He was invited to sit on the grading panel, he declined. As he watched he saw more people being graded to dan grade in one day than he and Derek Eastman Sensei had graded in the past 50 years.

Henry Ellis and Derek Eastman have only graded 14 people to dan grade. They are very proud of the loyalty of their dan grades, they have never had one dan grade leave or breakaway from the ESTA since it was formed in 1962. It is the intention of the ESTA to continue to teach and preserve the true traditional Aikido as taught by Kenshiro Abbe Sensei from its origins in the UK.

Henry Ellis

Co-author of Positive Aikido.

Available from Nine Circles.co.uk

<http://www.EllisAikido.org>

<http://www.geocities.com/britishaikido>

<http://www.KenshiroAbbe.com>

<http://www.nakazono.aberaikido.org.uk>