



Hartlepool Wadokai

Hatsumode - Shiramizu style!

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2009



At the start of each year, a lot of Japanese people visit shrines or temples to pray for comfort and health in the New Year. Shiramizu held their version of this event on Sunday 11th January, but to make things a little more interesting, Shiramizu *walked* to and from the temple which is in the nearby Satte City, a journey of approximately 15 km. This isn't a great distance, but it is when you think that some of the kids on the walk were only 6 or 7 years old!.

For us, the day started at 7:30am, when Iwasaki Sensei kindly picked up Amy, Lawrence and I from the Intern apartment and took us to the meeting place, the Sugito Town hall.

The Walk



Arakawa Sensei - leading the way!
Picture taken from the blog of
Arakawa Sensei

At 8am, approximately 100 people started the walk to the temple, with a clear blue sky, and a great view of Mount Fuji in the distance.



Hartlepool Wadokai



The boys are back in town...

Everyone was in high spirits for the walk, and it was a great chance to catch up with friends after the holidays.



*Yoshihara Sensei (Right Pic)
and Masatoshi - Arakawa sensei's youngest son, dressed like a Canadian Ninja!*

The Shrine



Shiramizu enter the shrine...



Picture taken from the blog of Arakawa Sensei



Hartlepool Wadokai

We had a short wait at the Sachi Miya Jinja temple whilst a baseball team finished off, and then it was the turn of Shiramizu. Obviously 100 people wouldn't have fit easily inside the temple, so we all waited outside.

We all lined up outside and Arakawa Sensei was invited inside to make an offering, when Arakawa Sensei came back out, the monk came outside to bless everyone.

He said some words in Japanese and we bowed, he said some more and we bowed again...



After we were all blessed, we did a short 5 minute training session of basics, which was actually hard work in the freezing cold! Then everyone lined up to pray at the temple, and also made a small offer of money towards the upkeep of the temple.

All the kids were given a lollypop and the adults were given some Sake, I would have preferred the lollypop but never mind!

Once everyone had finished praying at the temple, we headed back to the start point where we were all given some delicious miso soup.

After finishing the rest of our packed lunch, mine mainly consisting of rice balls, chocolate and cakes, we headed home to warm up!.

It was a really good morning, and everyone enjoyed catching up with each other on the walk, but it also had real significance in Japanese culture. I think events like this explain why Shiramizu has such a great family feel to it, despite the large number of students.

