



# A Slow Boat to Yokohama: A Judo Odyssey

*Syd Hoare*

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These are the memoirs of Syd Hoare, judo 8th Dan, who started judo at the famous London Budokwai in 1954 aged fifteen. After completing his National Service he followed the example of other Budokwai members and decided to go to Japan to train. After fifty days aboard a cargo passenger ship he reached his destination and began training, arguably in the toughest dojos in the world. During his four year training stint in Tokyo he lived with a Japanese family and began seriously studying the Japanese language. This included memorizing about 3000 Japanese characters/ideographs but more importantly it opened a window into the real life of Japan. Syd's natural curiosity and language ability took him into many strange byeways where he got to know a host of Japanese from many walks of life, from bargirls to yakuza gangsters, businessmen and university professors not to mention the many Japanese martial arts experts resident in Tokyo. His training in judo peaked in 1964 when he returned to the UK for the 1964 Olympic Selections to represent Great Britain in the judo event. He came out top in the middle-weight category. After the Olympics he returned home and participated in a number of international competitions before becoming one of the leading coaches in the country. A number of Olympic medallists trained under his direction at the Budokwai. Syd went on to write about ten best selling judo books including A-Z of Judo, A History of Judo and Judo Strategies. Syd decided to write these memoirs when he realized how formative and beneficial his years in Japan had been. He found he was able to wholeheartedly recommend a trip to Japan to any aspiring judoka.

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