

The Japan Society 2009 – 2010

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An Overview

During 2009 and 2010, the Japan Society continued to be very active, programming on average eighty-five events each year. Running alongside the core programme of activity for members, the Society offered support to schools teaching about Japan and, through its small grants scheme, made possible workshops, exchanges and community activity throughout the UK. A wide range of projects was undertaken over this period; none of which would have been possible without the generous financial support of our donors, who are listed elsewhere, or the help of many committed volunteers who gave so much of their time and skills.

As one gets older, significant anniversaries seem to become increasingly frequent and it is a measure of the long history of UK-Japan relations that we have had much to celebrate. Japan-UK 150, marking 150 years since the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce, began in 2008 and continued with further commemorative events throughout 2009. The centenary of the 1910 Japan British Exhibition in White City was marked with events beginning in 2009 and culminating in a family day in Hammersmith Park in May 2010.

This was also a period of consolidation and house-keeping behind the scenes, involving a great deal of work in launching a new website and developing a new database to combine the records of the Japan Society with those of Japan 21. This important activity should bear fruit in the coming years as we improve the way information is disseminated and shared.

Cultural Events and Lectures

The Japan Society continued to offer a very varied programme of events designed to appeal to people of all ages and diverse interests. A highlight in the annual calendar is always the lecture by the British Ambassador in Tokyo, when David Warren gave members a



2009 Annual Dinner, with Taro Hakase



2010 Annual Dinner

wide-ranging overview of the state of the UK-Japan relationship as seen from the Embassy in Ichibancho. Other recurring events were the Christmas party, kindly hosted by the Japanese Ambassador at the Embassy and supported by the Japan Centre, and the annual dinner. In 2009, dinner guests were entertained by the charismatic violinist, Taro Hakase, who gave a short performance and was later joined by actress Mayuko Takata in conversation with Christopher Purvis, speaking about their life in London. For our dinner in January 2010, we partnered with Phillip Neil Martin who produced an eye-catching fashion show featuring work created by Japanese designers based in the UK.

Leading up to the centenary of the Japan British Exhibition, members of the Japan Society partnered with the Friends of Hammersmith Park, Nippon Club and visiting Japanese gardeners for working parties in order to restore what was left of the Japanese Garden created in 1910. Led by Setsuo Kato and Ayako Hotta Lister, local residents learned of the historical association through active engagement with this practical project as well as an exhibition at Fulham Palace, which included loan material from the Japan Society's library. Two family days saw hundreds of people visit the Park to enjoy performances, arts and crafts, and Japanese food in the spot where one hundred years previously so many others had come for their first glimpse of Japanese cultural traditions.

On a larger scale, the Society partnered the Japanese Residents' Association, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Nippon Club on Japan Matsuri. This was one of those occasions where an idea seemed to develop organically within a community from discussions that were taking place independently among different groups. The result was an enormously successful urban festival, which transformed the Spitalfields market area. Performances showcased the talents of the local Japanese community, with strong involvement by school groups, amateur musicians and world-class acts, as well as volunteers leading participatory activities. Boasting a main stage, family stage and martial arts stage, Japan Matsuri was able to provide a setting for both large-scale and more intimate performances. A photo essay follows later in this volume.

There were many opportunities to visit exhibitions or to attend concerts and plays, with over thirty arts & culture events being organised. Highlights included a breakfast and private view of the *Kuniyoshi* exhibition at the Royal Academy in April 2009, thanks to JTI, where members were able to study the works with curator, Timothy Clarke; a recital in May of the same year by the exciting young Quartet Excelsior who performed a programme of contemporary work with a strong Japanese focus. The quartet also visited local schools to conduct workshops. In February, members attended Theatre de Complicité's acclaimed production of *Shunkin*, with a post-show reception with members of the cast and company, as well as a Japanese-themed production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Southwark Playhouse, which was followed by an in-depth discussion and question and answer session. 2010 saw the return of Yukio Ninagawa to the Barbican, with a spectacular production of *Musashi*, with Kabuki *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* at Sadler's Wells in June. On her retirement from the Royal Ballet,



In the Footsteps of Isabella Bird, at the Royal Geographical Society

Miyako Yoshida delighted members with an insight into the life of a Principal Ballerina and an overview of her career, in conversation with Kevin O'Hare, Administrative Director. A traveller in the other direction had been celebrated earlier in 2010, with an exhibition at the Royal Geographical Society; *In the Footsteps of Isabella Bird* provided a fascinating record of Kiyonori Kanasaka's contemporary recreation of Bird's 19th century travels in Japan and beyond. The arts year finished with a private view of *Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, a major exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery, in collaboration with Kyoto Costume Institute.

Visits to English gardens, to exhibitions such as the *Treasures of Lambeth Palace* and *Scottish Colourists* at the Fleming Collection, as well as seats for the Major General's Review in the lead up to the Trooping the Colour, were intended to allow Japanese members the chance to experience more of British culture, though proved equally popular with other members.

The Japanese Conversation Group continued its monthly meetings which allow participants to maintain and develop their language skills in an informal pub setting, as well as organising special events such as *hanami* parties, summer trips and a barbecue. Those who preferred a more structured learning experience were catered for by the Society's 10-week courses for intermediate level students, organised in association with SOAS. These were kindly hosted in 2009 by the Japan Local Government Centre and in 2010 by Toray Industries, allowing us to make the classes available at low cost.

An informal book club began in 2009 and, by the end of 2010, was a firm fixture in the Society's monthly calendar. At the outset, the books alternated between Japanese and non-Japanese authors, with the only criteria being that the work for discussion should be available in both English and Japanese languages. However, it soon became clear that members were most interested in Japanese literature which then became the focus.

Food and drink was the focus for other popular lifestyle events as members learned about Japanese whisky, now rated amongst the best in the world, and the more familiar sake and sushi, with

tutored tastings including a lecture by Ole Mouritsen at a special dinner at Saki restaurant.

The Japan Society continued to partner the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation on themed series of lectures: *Changing World Views: International Challenges for the UK and Japan* (2009) and *States in Change: National Identity in the UK and Japan* (2010), in which broad themes were explored by expert panels from a different angle each month. In 2009, we also partnered the Japanese Embassy on a short series of lectures to mark Japan-UK 150. Japanese and British speakers took a different aspect of the relationship as they discussed developments since the signing of the Treaty in three broad time frames. In honour of the contribution made by the late Carmen Blacker to Japanese studies in the UK, as well as to the Japan Society, we launched a new annual lecture with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures: Professor Donald Keene's inaugural lecture is reprinted in this volume.

In addition to the series above and to those featured in this volume, lectures included a talk on the work and changing practice of contemporary craftspeople involved in the creation of woodblock prints by Rebecca Salter, Senior Research Fellow at TrAIN; Hideta Kitazawa's lecture on *noh* mask-making; the last stand of the Tokugawa forces in Hokkaido by author Lesley Downer; Audrey Sansbury Talks' memories of Japan in the ten years before Pearl Harbor; Cultural images and narratives about the problem of compensating the emotional, domestic and sexual labour of women by Sharon Kinsella, lecturer in Japanese Studies at the University of Manchester; and a history of Japanese golf by Angus Lockyer, lecturer in Japanese History at SOAS. A special event was held at SOAS in September 2010 to mark the publication of Volume VII of *Britain & Japan: Biographical Portraits*, which brought the Japan Society's collection of individual memoirs to a cumulative total in excess of 350.

The Business Events Programme

The programme of business events provided topical briefings and seminars useful particularly, but not exclusively, to our corporate



Professor Donald Keene (front row, second from the left) at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures

members. Talks by leaders in business and government were followed by discussion and exchange of views on a wide range of subjects. As usual, the chairman held a series of small lunches, kindly hosted by member companies, in which key figures from the UK and Japan were invited to meet senior members of the Society. These included Sir William Castell, Chairman, The Wellcome Foundation; Stuart Chambers, President & CEO, Nippon Sheet Glass Group; Roger Godsiff MP, Chairman, British Japanese Parliamentary Group; Sir Richard Needham, Vice Chairman, NEC and Dyson; Sir Andrew Cahn, Chief Executive of UK Trade and Investment; Nick Anstee, Lord Mayor of London.

Lunchtime lectures and seminars, the majority of which were hosted by JETRO, allowed more time for detailed analysis of particular subjects. They included reports on the global economic crisis and its impact on Japan by Ian de Stains, Director, British Chamber of Commerce in Japan and David Cairns, Head of Trade & Investment, British Embassy in Tokyo; financial services legislation and reforms by Sir David Tweedie, Chairman, International Accounting Standards Board and Graham Bishop; The UK's

Response to Climate Change by David Cope; The Business of Ageing and the impact on companies of an older workforce by John Llewellyn; and a discussion with the Asia Pacific Technology Network on how to attract further Japanese investment to the UK.

The Society continued to arrange joint lunches in conjunction with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the UK. Speakers during 2009 and 2010 included: John Armitt, Chairman, Olympic Delivery Authority; Lord West of Spithead, Minister for Security; The Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business & Enterprise; John Greenwood, Chief Economist, Invesco Perpetual Fund; Bernard Bulkin, Former Vice President for Environment Affairs, BP; Alec Williams, Transport for London; and The Rt Hon The Lord Howell, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Schools Education

Through its activities for schools, the Japan Society encourages the study of Japan across the curriculum and supports teachers in providing opportunities for their students to gain a greater awareness and understanding of the country and its culture.

The Society's education team provides ongoing advice and resources to schools engaged in teaching and learning activities relating to Japan. As well as working in partnership with local authorities, it offers materials directly to schools throughout the country, including loan resources supplied to approximately 70 schools each year.

Workshops for secondary art and primary school teachers were held in Denbighshire and London, providing expert tuition and guidance for incorporating Japanese activity in the curriculum. The Japan Conference for Schools, a joint undertaking with the British Council, Japan Foundation and Embassy of Japan, involved participants from throughout the UK for seminars and workshops. The focus was on language teaching, school links as well as subject specific study of Japan.

A second sixth form conference was held at the Barbican Centre, offering students the chance to visit the *Future Beauty* exhibition,



Nihon buyo workshop with Hiroko Tanaka at the Sixth Form Japan Day at the Barbican Centre

and undertake a variety of practical workshops, as well as attending lectures about the lives and aspirations of their peers in Japan and techniques in Japanese lacquerware. A lecture demonstration by Blind Summit, the company which had provided the puppets for the production of *Shunkin* had participants spellbound.

The Japan Society was delighted to be involved in a major project to organise a programme of events for schools and teachers in conjunction with Pagoda Noh. This involved workshops and writing projects led by the creator of Pagoda, Jeanette Cheung and members of Theatre Nohgaku, culminating in performances of original *noh*-inspired work by students. The project is described in more detail elsewhere in this volume.

Visits were made by the Society's Japan in Your Classroom volunteers in Greater London, Brighton, Derby, Manchester and South Wales to some 160 schools. For most students a JIYC visit is their first opportunity to meet a Japanese person and to hear about Japan first-hand; the visits have a lasting impact. The volunteers were also active outside the classroom, providing family activities at Japan Matsuri, at the Hammersmith Park Japanese Garden Party



Blind Summit at Sixth Form Japan Day

and at events such as the Premiere Japan Film Festival. Special workshops by *furoshiki* expert Hiroaki Koyama as well as by lacquer and *maki-e* craftsmen were arranged at ten schools in London and the South East involving some 500 pupils. The experience of working with expert artists and craftsmen, passionate about their work and generous with their time and explanations, had a great impact on the young people involved.

The Society continued to provide support for school links: approximately 40 new links were created and over 60 schools made use of the Japan UK LIVE! website and related services to develop their links. With support from the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, Japan UK LIVE! was rebuilt in 2010 to make it easier for schools to use.

A review of school links was completed in 2009; this had monitored fifty-two links set up between April 2006 and March 2007 in order to generate data about the linking process and included fourteen detailed case studies of UK-Japan school links. The key findings of the review were that:

- Interest in and incentives for UK-Japan school links were increasing, particularly at primary / elementary school level



Lacquer workshops in London schools

- More schools were deciding to work together on curriculum-related projects
- More than half (56%) of links monitored came to an end before or shortly after 12 months. A third of links that had ended had never in fact got going
- The most common reasons cited for links coming to an end was a lack of time, the movement of staff to other schools and a shortage of funds.
- 80% of schools whose links had ended were keen to set up new links.
- The differences in timetables and school years, which reduces the time available for joint activities, were seen to be big challenges for UK-Japan links.
- Visits between partners had a significant impact on the strength and continuity of links, especially if made after partnerships had been formally established.
- The majority of UK schools felt that links with Japan were well supported and teachers recognised the important role played by the Japan Society and the British Council as well as funding bodies such as the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.
- Japan UK LIVE! was considered to be a valuable tool for establishing and supporting links between schools in the UK and Japan, with many schools commenting that it would not have been possible to carry out links without this infrastructure.
- The biggest need identified in terms of extra resources was funding, in particular for exchange visits to support links. One gap in provision that emerged was funding to enable Japanese schools to visit their UK partners.
- Links had a beneficial impact on pupils and staff involved and in many cases on pupils' families and the wider communities. A link with Japan often led to other developments such as the introduction of Japanese or taking part in national events.

The Society also worked with Japan Airlines on its biennial

haiku contest. The 2009-10 World Children's Haiku Contest had as its theme 'School', which elicited a thoughtful response from entrants. The first prize winner was William Duggleby (12) from Thomas Keble School, Stroud with Myles Cullum (9) from St. Cedd's School, Essex taking second place.

Japan Society Small Grants

An annual sum of up to £30,000 is set aside for grants in support of small-scale projects and events related to Japan. Priority is given to applications for grassroots projects and for activities involving schools and other educational establishments. Over the two years covered here, ninety-three grants were made averaging just under £600 each.

The majority of projects supported were organised in schools or provided opportunities for school students to participate in Japan-related activities. These ranged from Japan Days to complement ongoing study of Japan or Japanese language to music and drama workshops and activities in partnership with link schools in Japan.

Japan Society support helped exchange activities between Yamabiko-za children's theatre from Hokkaido with Funny Wonders in Buxton; *Looking for Yoghurt*, a cross cultural theatrical collaboration between artists in the UK, Japan and Korea; between young environmental leaders in the UK and Japan; as well as between scouts in Fife and Iwate.

Over twenty-nine schools Japan Days were supported along with thirty community projects; thirty two had an arts focus, while forty projects involved person-to-person exchange or workshops.

Although the individual amounts granted are relatively small, these grants provide opportunities for people throughout the UK to participate in education and exchange relating to Japan and thus contribute to raising awareness and understanding of the country and its culture in places where the Japan Society has no regular activity.