

The Japan Society Year in Review 2014

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In looking back over the year, it is always helpful to remember the mission of the Japan Society as set out in its Memorandum of Association:

- To promote learning and advance education in the subject of and with regard to Japan
- To promote the study of Japan and its people in all their aspects, traditional and modern, and to make the results of such study more accessible to the general public
- To promote the study of Britain and its culture by Japanese people and to further educational exchanges between Britain and Japan

The Society welcomes as members any who support these aims and who wish to join a community of people with an active interest in UK-Japan relations and in learning more about each other's life and culture. This mission informs all areas of the Society's programme, whether direct school-focused education initiatives, lectures and seminars for the general public and business leaders, events introducing aspects of the culture of both countries, opportunities for people to meet in more informal settings, the provision of research facilities through the library, the publication of books relating to Japan, or the programme of small grants made in support of Japan-related projects throughout the UK.

In 2014, the Society organized over ninety different events across all areas of its outreach, including Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Lectures, Education and Business Events, as well as special annual fixtures. The general events programme included: the Christmas party; ten business related events; thirteen conversation group events; twenty-two events aimed at younger members or families; six chairman's events; thirteen lectures and nine arts and culture events.

The Business Network

During the year, the programme of business events addressed issues of mutual concern to Japanese and non-Japanese members, providing

briefings by senior experts and opportunities to engage in discussion. The chairman held a series of small lunches in which key figures based in both the UK and Japan were invited to meet senior members of the Society. Subjects in 2014 included finance and economics (Amari Akira, Minister of State of Economic & Fiscal Policy; Kuroda Haruhiko, Governor of the Bank of Japan; Andrew Smithers, Chairman, Smithers & Co Ltd), areas of UK-Japan cooperation including Africa (The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP) and the Olympics (Masuzoe Yōichi, Governor of Tokyo), as well as contemporary Japan (Inada Tomomi, Minister of State for Regulatory Reform).

Larger business lectures and seminars were again generously hosted by JETRO and corporate members of the Society. These included a discussion on Abenomics by David Pilling, Asia Editor for the *Financial Times*; insights from the London 2012 Games by Lord Deighton, former CEO of LOCOG; an overview of European Energy Policy by Philip Lowe, former Director-General for Energy at the European Commission; and a report on the Macroprudential Policy and Initiatives of the Bank of Japan by Satō Takehiro, Policy Board Member at the Bank. Seminars on



Business briefing with Minister Amari

Maritime Security and Investment in Africa were organised in response to suggestions from members and were very well attended.

The Society continued to arrange joint lunches in conjunction with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the UK, which provided opportunities for Japanese and non-Japanese to meet and to hear from guest speakers, who were during the year: Satō Takafumi, President, Tokyo Stock Exchange Regulation; The Rt Hon Danny Alexander MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury; and Sir William Patey, former Ambassador to Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Sudan.

The Japan Society values its partnerships with other organisations with similar aims and concerns in developing a programme which is of interest and benefit to the membership. In the current economic climate, the sharing of up to date information and best practice is particularly important and the Society cooperated with UKTI, JETRO, Chatham House, the Japan Security Dealers' Association and Asia-Pacific Technology Network to provide opportunities for members to build networks and hear from experts.

These events are important in ensuring that Japan Society members have access to the most up-to-date information about the bilateral relationship, about domestic issues which have a global impact and about ways in which Japan and Britain cooperate in international affairs. Although they are of particular relevance to staff of corporate members, they are also of interest to and attended by many individual members. Participation by both Japanese and non-Japanese allows members to hear a range of views and understand issues in a wider perspective.

A Wide-Ranging Programme

As always, the Society's general programme in 2014 included events designed to reflect the diverse interests and enthusiasms of its members. An annual highlight is the address given by the serving British Ambassador to Japan, which was given in March by Tim Hitchens, reflecting on his first year in post. This was heavily over-subscribed, with a capacity audience filling the auditorium at Nomura International for the talk and lively question and answer session. (The transcript of this lecture was printed in *Proceedings* 150).

We were delighted to partner with the Canadian High Commission to bring Katsura Sunshine to London for a rare performance of *rakugo* in English, kindly hosted by Clifford Chance. Building on the success of that event, Sunshine has returned to London for further shows as well as performing, with Japan Society support, at a Japan Day organised by Japan Society North West in Manchester, giving opportunities for non-Japanese speaking audiences to appreciate this popular comic tradition. By contrast, a special guest lecture by Tsumura Reijirō focussed on the world of noh theatre, and gave participants an actor's perspective as they tried on masks and attempted a noh chant.

A Society visit to Cambridge took members behind the scenes at the Fitzwilliam Museum, where print curator, Craig Hartley, spoke about the Museum's collection and allowed participants to examine prints at close quarters. The group then went on to meet Koyama Noboru, head of the Japanese department at Cambridge University Library, for a tour of the archive and to examine some of its treasures. The British Museum's superb collection of *netsuke* was the focus of a talk by Tsuchiya Noriko

and Max Rutherford who gave insights into these 'miniature masterpieces', their history and varying styles, and how they have been collected in the West.

The lifestyle calendar in 2014 was as busy as ever, with a range of regular events including the Japanese Conversation Group's monthly meetings for those wishing to maintain and improve their language skills. Those interested in learning other skills were also catered for, with cookery classes at Sozai Cooking School and a day of cultural workshops with the Furusato group from Japan. Sake and beer tastings featured



Cookery class at Sozai Cooking School



A Thousand Cranes theatre company's Kuroda Haruka performs the story of Tanabata, at Tanabata Festival, Southbank Centre - photo: Alice Caffyn

alongside golf matches, but were not to blame for the Society's defeat by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in the annual Collar Cup.

The Society brought Japan to a family audience in July, collaborating with Southbank Centre and the Embassy of Japan on a Tanabata Festival. A day of workshops in June brought young and old together to help make *fukinagashi* streamers which created a vibrant splash of Japanese colour at the Festival Hall until September. This was followed by a packed day of performances and craft activities on Sunday 13 July. Taiko, singing and story-telling performances featured alongside dance, manga and robot workshops, which with a tanabata origami treasure trail kept visitors engaged for several hours. Over forty members and friends of the Japan Society volunteered their time to make this event a great success.

The Japan Society book club settled into its new regular meeting place at Daiwa Foundation Japan House, which provided a relaxed environment conducive to informal discussions. A core of regular attendees is joined on an ad hoc basis by others for whom a particular book has special appeal. February's meeting was held at the Embassy of

Japan to visit the Natsume Sōseki exhibition and to discuss the author with Damian Flanagan, whose translation of *Tower of London* was that month's book. In July, Stephen Dodd hosted a special event to discuss his book *The Youth of Things: Life and Death in the Age of Kajii Motojiro* including the translated short stories of Kajii Motojiro.

An essay competition run in partnership with Dalkey Archive Press invited essays on the importance of the translation of Japanese literature. Entries discussed the role of literature in understanding the present and connecting with the past, while winner Leda Roodbaraky described the curse of the English-speaking world, where translated work was in danger of being assigned to the realm of academics and intellectuals. Her prize was a mini library, including novels from the Dalkey Archive Press back catalogue and selected Japan Society publications.

The Japan Society again partnered the Japan Association, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Nippon Club to stage Japan Matsuri on 27 September in Trafalgar Square. Japanese mascot characters, featured for the first time, proved a popular hit with Sanomaru and Kumamon being particular favourites of the crowd. A moving performance of noh with contemporary ballet told the story of the regeneration of the Hakurakusei sake brewery after the 2011



Japan Matsuri 2014 – photo: Paul Jones

earthquake and tsunami, in which Living National Treasure, Tsumura Reijirō, was joined by UK-based dancers, Ishibashi Kyōmi and Tsuruga Kazuhito. Super J Fashion Show saw four Japanese-themed worlds come to life through contemporary music with kimono co-ordination and dynamic dance and ninja performances. Although these exciting acts from Japan are warmly welcomed, the heart of Matsuri is the Japan-related community in London and the organisers were delighted to showcase local performers, including schools. Japanese festival food, stalls introducing a range of products and services, and activities for all the family are essential to complete this annual event.

London Lectures

The lectures programme in 2014 ranged from architecture to surrealism, from international politics to music. As always, the monthly academic lecture held every third Monday at Swedenborg Hall formed the mainstay of Japan Society lectures. In addition to those featured in this volume, lectures in 2014 included a talk on Canadians of Japanese descent in postwar Canada by Jonathan Mackintosh, Lecturer in World History at Plymouth University; a view of relations between Japan and the Koreas by John Swenson-Wright, Senior University Lecturer in Modern Japanese Studies and fellow of Darwin College, Cambridge; Music and Nature in the Transnational Shakuhachi Scene by Joe Browning, performer and academic; University of Cambridge Senior Lecturer in Modern Japanese Studies, Brigitte Steger's study of sleep in tsunami evacuation shelters in Yamada, Iwate Prefecture; and The Siege of Tsingtao by Jonathan Fenby, former editor of the *Observer* and *South China Morning Post*. The 2014 Carmen Blacker Lecture, in partnership with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, was given by Professor Peter Kornicki and is reprinted in this volume.

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. 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



Fukushima Youth Sinfonietta with Treehouse, part of Kids Company, in Camden – © Eloise Campbell

Japan Society has no regular activity. Priority is given to applications for grassroots projects and for activities involving schools and other educational establishments. In 2014, twenty-seven grants were made averaging some £700 each. Of these sixteen 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 primary school workshops exploring sound and music and activities in partnership with link schools in Japan.

Japan Society support helped exchange activities between Fukushima Youth Sinfonietta and youth organisations in London including Kids Company and Keys of Change. Grants were also awarded to organisations wishing to extend the reach of exhibitions and performance projects, including: Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, whose *furoshiki* exhibition was accompanied by an extensive education programme; Rochester Guildhall Museum, where a series of Japanese themed activities for family groups celebrated Medway's historical connection with Japan; A Thousand Cranes for workshops in tandem with their stage adaptation of Kitamura Satoshi's children's book *Me and My Cat?*; Southwark Playhouse; Tate St Ives; Llandudno Museum and

University of the Creative Arts. Support was also given to community Japan Days in London, Manchester and Plymouth, where Japan400 celebrations continued on 27 September, the 400th anniversary of the return of the Clove from Japan.

Schools Education

The schools education programme has been developed out of a belief in the value to young people in the UK of growing up with an awareness and understanding of Japan and its culture. In addition to historical and business reasons for learning about a key international partner, there are more general benefits of broadening horizons and raising aspirations. Through its activities for schools, the Society supports teachers, who may have limited experience of Japan themselves, in providing these opportunities for their students.

Throughout the year, the Society's education team provides 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 seventy schools each year.

The Japan Conference for Schools, organised with the Japan Foundation at the Embassy of Japan in March, involved over fifty schools. The day encompassed a series of primary and secondary language and school linking and cultural workshops, along with a key note speech by Crispin Chambers of Tavistock College, Teacher of the Year in 2013. On a smaller scale, a Discover Japan course was held in Great Malvern in Worcestershire, incorporating cultural workshops for Key Stage 2 pupils alongside training for teachers in the local authority.

120 sixth form students of Japanese and their teachers attended a one-day conference on 6 November which aimed to provide insights into life in Japan and less familiar aspects of Japanese culture. Lecturers included Tom Burn, Deputy Head of the East Asia Pacific Department, FCO and Dr Angus Lockyer, Lecturer in Japanese History, SOAS. Representatives of British and Japanese universities and a former British student, who had spent time at university in Japan, provided information on opportunities to continue to develop their interest in Japan and Japanese after leaving school.

During the year visits were made by the Society's Japan in Your Classroom volunteers in Greater London, Brighton, Derby, Manchester and South Wales to some fifty schools. For most students a Japan in Your Classroom visit is their first opportunity to meet a Japanese person and to hear about Japan first-hand. The visits have a lasting impact. A special visit was arranged for three NHK Radio Taisō presenters, who spent a morning running sessions with children in Years 3 to 6 at Westbourne Primary School, and then went on to work with elderly users and local primary school children at the Third Age Centre.

Support for school links has continued to be an important element of the Society's work. During 2014, new partnerships were established and existing links strengthened through exchange trips. Kobe University Fuzoku Junior High School brought 150 students to visit their new partner school, Cirencester Deer Park School, and Cropwell Primary School in Nottingham had another successful visit from their partner, Komaki Elementary School in Nagano. During Takamatsu Daiichi Senior High School's annual visit to County Upper School in Bury St. Edmunds, students continued their joint science studies with a Science Day of designing and building exercises and a study trip to Sizewell B Power Station. In the virtual world, some sixty school partnerships are now using Japan UK LIVE! and related services to develop their links.

In October the Society facilitated a trip by the Head and Deputy Head of Maryland Primary School in Newham, to visit schools in Osaka in order to research methods of teaching critical thinking skills. This is a topic of interest in both countries and so in addition to feeding back to colleagues in London, the teachers will continue to meet and discuss with researchers from Japan.

The Society again worked with Japan Airlines on its biennial haiku contest. The 13th World Children's Haiku Contest had as its theme 'Dreams', which elicited a varied and imaginative response from schools. With a record eight hundred entries from thirty seven schools throughout the UK, the judges had much to discuss. First prize winners were Frya Hannay (12) from Mid Yell Junior High School, Shetland, Joshua Jones (8) from St. Cedd's School, Essex and Millie Severn (11) from Toothill School, Nottinghamshire.

Japan Society Publications

2014 was a busy year for publications. The *Art lover's guide to Japanese museums* was launched at the start of the year and soon proved to be meeting a need for an easily accessible introduction to art museums and their collections. This selection of some well- and less well-known museums is a useful starting point for those keen to learn more about Japan through its art treasures and encourages the visitor to venture beyond the main urban centres. The autumn saw the publication of two books with an historical focus. The first, *The Growing Power of Japan, 1967-1972: Analysis and Assessments from John Pilcher and the British Embassy, Tokyo*, provides a valuable record of Japan's progress at this turning point in her post-war history, as well as insights into the hopes and expectations of the British government in its dealings with Japan. *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits* Vol. IX was launched in December; containing fifty-seven 'portraits', it brings the Japan Society's collection of individual memoirs to a cumulative total of nearly five hundred. Members may purchase copies of the *Art lover's guide* at a discount price, and can obtain a free copy of each of the two historical volumes while stocks last.