

## Minutes of the 125<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of The Japan Society

*Held at 13-14 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QP*

*at 6.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 20 September 2022*

Bill Emmott

Bill Emmott, Chairman of the Japan Society, opened the meeting by welcoming members in person to the AGM along with the Society's President, the Japanese Ambassador, Hayashi Hajime. He thanked everyone for their continued support of the Society's work. He noted that it was remarkable that both countries were holding State Funerals: the UK having just held the funeral for Her Majesty the Queen and Japan about to hold the funeral for former Prime Minister Abe. He expressed once again on behalf of the Japan Society condolences to the family of Mr Abe and the people of Japan.

The Chairman then invited Ambassador Hayashi to say a few words.

Ambassador Hayashi

Ambassador Hayashi expressed condolences on the death of the Queen. He noted how impressive he had found the reaction of the British people and their expressions of affection for the late Queen. He reported that Their Majesties, the Emperor and Empress of Japan had visited London to attend the funeral. After arriving on Saturday, they had attended a reception hosted by King Charles, attended the Lying in State, and the funeral itself yesterday. Although it was a short visit, it was historic for being the first overseas visit by Their Majesties since the enthronement in 2019. As Ambassador, and as President of the Japan Society, he was grateful that they had travelled to the UK on this occasion to share their sympathy with the royal family and the people of this country.

Ambassador Hayashi noted that the UK had a new prime minister and cabinet, and that this was a time when the two governments in London and Tokyo would start working together on bilateral cooperation and friendship. Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Truss were due to meet in New York, when they would start to discuss future plans, together with similar contact by other cabinet officials. The autumn was set to be a busy time for such contacts, which were so important.

The recent removal of the requirement for PCR tests for visitors to Japan would make it easier to resume person to person exchanges, though visa requirements still remained. Ambassador Hayashi indicated that further adjustments to the regulations for travel could be expected in the coming weeks, facilitating travel for business and pleasure.

He concluded by saying how pleased he was that this year's AGM could take place in person, although unfortunately it was not possible to hold the meeting at the Embassy. It was a wonderful opportunity for exchange and making future plans.

Bill Emmott

The Chairman thanked the Ambassador for his words. He reported that a letter of condolence had been sent on behalf of the Society to our Patron, the Duke of Gloucester. He also expressed hopes that the new King might extend very quickly an invitation to Their Imperial Majesties for a State Visit, the planned visit in 2020 having had to be cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He invited Heidi Potter to give a report on the Society's activities.

Heidi Potter

Heidi reported that although it had not been possible to hold in person programmes during 2021, the Society had begun to resume much normal activity during this year. Most recently, the Annual Dinner had been held at Chelsea Physic Garden and a family event had taken place at Hammersmith Park Japanese Garden with the Embassy of Japan. Regular lectures were again being held at Swedenborg Hall with a series of events on Japanese arts planned for the autumn. Other popular events had included shochu tastings and visits outside London to the Minoru Nomata exhibition at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea and to the Dojima Sake Brewery. A number of events were still being held online, which enabled the Society to extend its reach outside the London area. She invited members to share their views on the balance of in person and online events and how they would like to see the Society's future programme.

The Education team were also resuming in person events and visits, though it was necessary to ensure the safety of our school visit volunteers, many of whom were vulnerable. They continued to work with experts and teachers to create new teaching resources, available to download for classroom use.

Bill Emmott mentioned also the new initiative of early career networking events, in partnership with London Business School. He recalled the importance of the volunteers who made much of our education and outreach activity possible. The support of the members to our online and in person events had been very encouraging, including the large number including, Ambassador and Madame Hayashi, who had joined the annual dinner contributing to the wonderful atmosphere.

He thanked members for their continued support, which was critical to the Society, mentioning in particular the President's Circle corporate donors, JTI, Mitsubishi Corporation, Mitsui & Co and Nomura International.

He warmly invited suggestions from any members for companies which are not yet members of the Society, which have a connection with Japan and might be interested in joining.

Bill Emmott updated the meeting on plans for the sale of the library. Members were aware that the board had resolved several years ago to sell the library, which was a deteriorating asset. We did not have a suitable room to house it, and it was not in active use. After a long period of discussion and obtaining propositions for disposal of the library, a contract had been signed with Sotheby's. They had taken items for sale and were in the process of cataloguing and confirming sale estimates, which would be presented to the board for final approval.

Should approval be given, the sale would take place in Asian Art Week. The auction would take place online, though there would be an exhibition at Sotheby's in New Bond Street. Notice of the sale would be sent to members in case any were interested in purchasing items.

Finally, the chairman noted that the original notice of today's Meeting called the meeting to be held at the Embassy of Japan, 101 – 104 Piccadilly at 6.00 p.m today. However, with the Embassy being closed and not available, he confirmed that no quorum was present at the time or within half an hour from the appointed time for the meeting. As a result, pursuant to the Articles of the Association of the Company, the Board had determined to hold the Meeting at the Daiwa Foundation Japan House at 6.30 p.m. He then opened the adjourned Meeting.

He invited questions from members.

Christopher Purvis sought assurance that donors, or their families, had been consulted about the sale of the library. He suggested that the proceeds should form the basis of an endowment fund, which might also encourage other donations.

Heidi noted that the items to be sold via Sotheby's had been given to the Society in its early years, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was no reason to suppose that they could not be offered for sale. Bill Emmott reported that the board had reserves of about 12 months' expenditure and had just established an investment committee to invest these funds responsibly. One possibility would be for the library proceeds to form the nucleus of a future endowment and to seek to raise money on that basis.

Maggie Ellis congratulated the Society on its excellent lecture programme. A recent highlight was the lecture by Rachel Peat curator of the *Japan: Courts and Cultures* exhibition, which had originally been planned for 2020.

Martin Barrow suggested that the Japan Society could play a role in helping to encourage exchanges and visits as Japan re-opens to overseas visitors.

Sean Curtin commented that the Japan Society Review had just reached the 100<sup>th</sup> issue, a significant milestone and a credit to the Society. Heidi noted that Sean had been the founding editor of the publication and congratulated him on its success.

## Agenda Items

The Chairman gave a brief reminder of the AGM vote and the board and trustee structure and tenure.

In this AGM members were asked to re-elect five ordinary trustees: Sue Hudson, Tadaharu Iizuka, Yuuichiro Nakajima, Neil Riley and Pernille Rudlin. Biographies for each candidate had been circulated in the official AGM papers.

The following resolutions were passed:

1. To receive and adopt the audited annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2021 and the Trustees' report.
2. To reappoint Richard Place Dobson as auditors and to authorize the Board to approve their remuneration as thought fit.
3. To re-appoint Sue Hudson as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society
4. To re-appoint Tadaharu Iizuka as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society
5. To re-appoint Yuuichiro Nakajima as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society.
6. To re-appoint Neil Riley as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society.
7. To re-appoint Pernille Rudlin as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society

## Breakout Discussions

Following the meeting, members spent time in smaller 'breakout' rooms to share views and ideas about four areas of the Japan Society's activity:

- (i) Business events & networking
- (ii) Arts, culture & social events
- (iii) Schools education and wider outreach
- (iv) Links with other Japanese community groups in the UK