

The Japan Society Year in Review 2012

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Where 2011 was dominated by the Great East Japan Earthquake and its aftermath, 2012 was a year of celebration, with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympics. During a visit by their Majesties, the Emperor and Empress of Japan, to the UK to attend the Jubilee celebrations, they met with members of the British and Japanese communities, including the Japan Society, to thank them for their support following the Earthquake. During the Olympic period, the Japan Society joined with the Japan Association, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Nippon Club, to watch live footage and cheer on the Japanese team at 2012 Japan House.

At the Annual General Meeting in June, Christopher Purvis stood down as chairman of the Society at the end of his six year term. During this time, the Society made significant changes both in its activities and financial structure.

The Society is a charity with an educational mission. In 2012, that mission is being accomplished both through activities attended by members and through engagement with a broader audience, particularly school children. Under Christopher's leadership the Society remained true to its roots as an organization promoting the academic study of Japan, providing a platform for learned discussion and debate through lectures and other events, with a fine library and occasional publications. At the same time, an increasing number of events are now open to the wider public and much effort and expenditure is devoted to the schools education programme. The importance of inspiring young people to look beyond their own borders to understand another culture, particularly one as rich and important as that of Japan, cannot be underestimated.

This shift in activity has been reflected in a change in financial model. The majority of the Society's expenditure is now funded by generous donors, individuals and companies, who share this vision for the UK-Japan relationship and who have enabled the Society to double its annual turnover during these six years. The Society is grateful to all those who have given such support and has much for which to

thank Christopher. It was fitting that Christopher was decorated by the Government of Japan, receiving The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, from His Majesty the Emperor in November 2012.

Sir David Warren KCMG, whose tour of duty as Ambassador in Japan did not finish until November, was elected chairman with effect from 1 January 2013.

Events in 2012

The objectives of the Japan Society stress its educational mission: the central aim of its activity is to enhance understanding of Japanese life and culture and to promote links between Japan and the UK. This informs all areas of its programme: 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; small grants made in support of Japan-related projects organized by others. Financial support from donors enables the Society to include a significant number of low cost or free events in its programme, to offer the majority of its schools education services free of charge, and to set aside up to £30,000 to support events organized by others and which are in furtherance of the Society's objectives.

In 2012, the Society organized over eighty different events spanning a wide range of subject and format. The general events programme included: the annual dinner and Christmas party; twelve business related



Magician Katsu performing at the Japan Society

Annual Dinner 2012

events; thirteen conversation group events; twenty events aimed at younger members or families; four chairman's lunches; sixteen lectures and eleven art and culture events. The programme also included several events which focused on the recovery in Tohoku and assessment of current needs and activity in the region.

The business programme

As usual, a series of events relating to business issues provided opportunities to share ideas and information relating to topical issues. In developing this programme, the Society is pleased to work in partnership with others including JETRO, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the UK (JCCI), and several member companies.

The series of joint lunches with the JCCI were again held at the National Liberal Club; each featured a special guest who spoke briefly after the meal, before taking questions off the record. Philip Stephens of the Financial Times, who under the heading *Prospects for the Coalition* gave his observations on the Government and the challenges it would face in the coming year particularly in relation to the UK's role within Europe, was the guest in February. The subject for Robin Niblett, Director of Chatham House, was *From West to East: Testing the Re-balance* in which he discussed shifts of power and influence across the globe and how Japan, the UK and other countries in the Western world should adjust in the face of the impressive economic growth of the BRICs. Also during the year, Glen Fukushima, former President & CEO of Airbus Japan, looked at *Developments in Corporate Japan*, the Japanese Ambassador reviewed his time in office and assessed the state of UK Japan relations, and Lord Janvrin spoke on *The Monarchy and its relevance in modern day Britain*.

Running in parallel with these lunches, a series of lunchtime seminars allowed members to hear from experts and discuss topical issues in greater depth. The Society is again grateful to the director-general and staff of JETRO, who hosted these events, which included a panel on *Climate Change and Japan's Perspective on the 17th Conference of the Parties* at the start of the year and culminated in a discussion of *Global Warming and Energy Challenges for Japan and the UK* in September.

Other sessions included an update on tourism recovery by Ryoichi Matsuyama, President of JNTO and a briefing on UK-Japan Trade by Sue Kinoshita, Director of Trade and Investment at the British Embassy in Tokyo.

Two particularly popular lectures were held in February. The annual lecture by the British Ambassador, Sir David Warren, was broad in scope as he reviewed the events of the past year. He spoke about the Embassy's response to the earthquake and the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor as well as reporting on economic and political developments. (The transcript of this lecture was printed in Proceedings 148). Later in the month, fashion designer Paul Smith joined Andrew Fraser, chairman of the Society's business group in conversation, providing insights into his business practices and obvious love of Japan, which gave the audience a clear indication of why he had met with such success in the Japanese market.

In addition to the general business programme, the chairman held a series of small lunches in which key figures based in both the UK and



Sir David Warren, the new chairman of the Japan Society from 1 January 2013

Japan were invited to meet senior members of the Society. Guests in 2012 were Miranda Curtis, who discussed business practice and her experience over two decades on the board of a Japanese company, Lord Hall who addressed the subject of *Business, Government and the Arts*, Roger Gifford who highlighted the topics that would feature on his agenda as the incoming Lord Mayor of London, and George Olcott, currently on the board of several Japanese companies, who assessed the prospects for globalization of business in Japan. Thanks to the member companies who hosted these events: PricewaterhouseCoopers, KPMG, HSBC and BlackRock respectively.

A broad appeal

The Society continued to offer a broad general programme of formal and informal events to appeal to people with a wide range of interests and ages. 2012 was a good year for Japanese theatre in London with group visits arranged to three very different productions: *The Bee* directed by Hideki Noda, *Coriolanus* performed by the Chiten Theatre Company from Kyoto and Yukio Ninagawa's *Cymbeline*. Though both adaptations of Shakespeare, Chiten's minimalist *Coriolanus* was as different from Ninagawa's sumptuous *Cymbeline* as it was from Noda's unsettling contemporary play about a family taken hostage.

Members also had the opportunity to attend private views of the *Kitsch Kogei* exhibition at the ICN Gallery, the Yayoi Kusama retrospective at Tate Modern and Mariko Mori's *Rebirth* at The Royal Academy. A visit to the archive at Kew Gardens revealed exquisite botanical paintings on wood, while a workshop by Yoko Takenami encompassed different styles of calligraphy from block kanji to cursive kana. Other events included food and drink tastings, golf tournaments, social events, provision of family workshops at HyperJapan and support of the Japanese Olympic team through attendance at special screenings at 2012 Japan House during the period of the Games.

The monthly book club continued to grow in strength with a good mix of regular and occasional participants. Books chosen were usually available in translation in both Japanese and English and in 2012 all were by Japanese authors or set in Japan, including literary classics

and contemporary fiction. A highlight was a talk by author Lian Hearn, perhaps best known for her Otori trilogy, who spoke about her latest work *Blossoms and Shadows*, an historical novel set amidst the confusion of the bakumatsu period.

In its fourth year, Japan Matsuri moved to Trafalgar Square for another successful event on 6 October. The Japan Society has a formal role as corporate director of the Japan Matsuri company, with Sean Curtin as its nominated representative on the board. Staging Matsuri in Trafalgar Square required the engagement of a specialist team. This increased the cost of the event, but reduced the administrative burden on the four partner organizations: the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the UK, the Japan Association, the Nippon Club and the Japan Society. Volunteers from each organization took responsibility for managing different elements of the event. Approximately 70,000 people visited Japan Matsuri on a sunny autumn day, which featured food provided by many of London's Japanese restaurants, activities for children and a packed programme on both the main stage and martial arts area. A first for 2012 was participation by a team of NHK Radio Taisho



The martial arts stage at Japan Matsuri 2012 (Image © British Naginata Association)

presenters, who put visitors to Matsuri through their paces.

The conversation group continued to meet once a month in a central London pub in which it creates a space where only Japanese is spoken. It allows Japanese and non-Japanese, members and non-members, to talk in a friendly and informal setting, to maintain and develop their language skills. Special events during the year, such as the *hanami* picnic in April, are always popular. The Society again ran three 10-week courses in pre-intermediate Japanese, kindly hosted by Toray Europe.

London Lectures

The lectures programme as usual covered a wide range of subject matter. The monthly academic lecture, held every third Monday, formed the core of this aspect of our public programming. In addition to those featured in this volume, lectures in 2012 included Nicole Rousmaniere's expert survey *Collecting Japanese Ceramics for the British Museum in the later 19th century*; Aaron Moore's study of the war diaries of Japanese soldiers from 1937-1940 *The Crucible of Self*; new insights into *The Tale of Genji* in Rajayshree Pandya's *Gender, Power and the Erotic Body*; *Photography and the 1960 Anpo Crisis* by Julia Adeney Thomas; Helen Woolley's report on a research trip to post-earthquake Tohoku *Children's Lost Landscapes*; a search for *Tengu and the Warrior Traditions* by Roald Knutsen and Hugh Cortazzi's introduction to his latest book, *Images of Japan 1885-1912: Scenes, Tales and Flowers*.

The Society took opportunities to work in partnership with other organizations, including SOAS, Chelsea College of Art and Design, the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and Japan Room to open these, and other, lectures to a wide audience of members, students and the general public. The 2012 Carmen Blacker Lecture, in partnership with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, was given by Professor Ben-Ami Shillony 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 British Isles to participate in education and exchange relating to Japan. Applications are encouraged from those organizing grassroots projects and from schools and other educational establishments. Attention is focused on projects where a relatively small injection of funds can make a real difference and which increase awareness and understanding of Japan and its culture. In 2012, 40 grants were made averaging approximately £600 each. Of these some 24 were organized 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 funding for workshops using role plays on emergency response after Tohoku to develop geography skills, and student research activities on contemporary literature. Young people were involved in research, display and conservation work on items in the collection at Sheffield Museums and a community radio project is enabling 15-18 year olds in Leeds to work with counterparts in Tokyo and Tohoku. Other small grants were given for the creation of educational resources and programmes to accompany the *Threads of Silk and Gold* exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; the provision of workshops by Marewrew, an Ainu Upopo group, at the WOMAD festival, and the development of butoh workshops in London. Support was also given to community Japan Days in Basildon, Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Sheffield.

Schools Education

Within the constraints of the National Curriculum, it is nevertheless possible to use Japanese themes to enhance teaching and learning in many subjects besides geography. The Society provides opportunities to make cross-curricular connections and equips teachers with the resources to teach about Japan within their subject areas.

As well as working in partnership with local authorities, it provides materials directly to schools throughout the country, including loan resources supplied to approximately 70 schools each year. In 2012, the Society supported the 12th JAL World Children's Haiku Contest, which was entered by students from 37 schools from Shetland to the South-

West of England and Northern Ireland.

Discover Japan teacher in-service training courses were held in Loughborough and Edinburgh with a focus on ideas for primary school teachers and art teachers, who explored ways to bring Japan alive through, for example, soroban, kamishibai story telling activities, haiku, woodblock printing and manga. The Society also provided a special talk about the situation in Japan, since the earthquake and nuclear emergency, at the 2012 Geographical Association Conference, which was given by Dr Peter Matanle from Sheffield University.

During the year visits were made by volunteers in Greater London, Brighton, Derby, Manchester and South Wales to some eighty 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. Special visits to schools were arranged with haiku poet, Sho Otaka, and by Radio Taiso presenters. These complemented other work the schools were doing on Japan and broadened pupils' experience and understanding of the country.

The Society's activity is not limited to primary schools and 180 sixth form students of Japanese and their teachers attended a one-day conference on 9 November which gave them insights into life in Japan, less familiar aspects of Japanese culture, and information on opportunities to continue the study of Japan and Japanese beyond school at university, either in the UK or Japan.

Support for school links has continued to be an important element of the Society's work. Approximately fifteen new links were established, with some sixty school partnerships now using Japan UK LIVE! and related services to develop their links. In thus removing the language barrier, the Japan Society enables teachers and students to concentrate on what information they would like to share with their partners. The experience of communicating with and learning from peers on the other side of the world inspires students to look beyond their local community and become more aware of the world around them. A school linking seminar was held in Osaka in July, which provided the opportunity for Japanese teachers to share experience and learn from each other about working effectively with their British partner schools.