

The Japan Society Year in Review 2011

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The Society's Mission

Inevitably, the activities of the Japan Society in 2011 were dominated by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. All in the Society were shocked and saddened as news of the disaster unfolded. Details of the Japan Society's response and subsequent activity are reported elsewhere in this issue of *Proceedings*, but here we will focus on its core programmes.

The Japan Society is a charity with a broad educational mission to promote the study of Japan (and Britain in Japan) and to further educational exchanges between our two countries. We accomplish our mission through events attended primarily by our members and through engagement with a broader audience, particularly school children.

The main activities of the Society comprise awards, events, the library, publications, schools education and small grants. In delivering its programme, the Society is especially grateful to the companies and individuals who share its belief in the importance of promoting a good mutual understanding between the UK and Japan, and who provide essential financial support. This enables the Society to include a significant number of low cost or free events to make the programme accessible to all. The majority of the Society's schools education services are provided free of charge. In addition up to £30,000 has been set aside each year for disbursement through the small grants programme in support of events organized by others which are in furtherance of the Society's objectives and which reach new audiences across the UK.

During 2011, the Japan Society arranged some eighty different events over a wide range of activities, both independently and in partnership with other organizations. In keeping with its objective to promote the study and understanding of Japan, the programme strikes a balance between those activities tailored to particular interests and those designed to provide new opportunities for the

public to participate in Japan-related events. The general events programme included: the annual dinner; thirteen business related events; thirteen conversation group events; nineteen events aimed at younger members and families; three chairman's lunches or dinners; eighteen lectures; eight art and culture events and twelve other events, including those to raise awareness of events following the Great East Japan Earthquake.



The Japan Society Annual Dinner 2011

Responding to the needs of business

The business group enjoyed a year of lively and informative events. We are particularly grateful to the director-general and staff of JETRO, who hosted most of the lunchtime lecture series.

These included *Prospects for Pharmaceuticals*, a panel discussion with Jun Arima of JETRO with Jon Mowles and Nigel Whittle of UKTI. This was a timely look at a sector which has seen significant investment by Japanese companies in recent years, and has been affected by many regulatory, organizational and financial developments. In the same series, Andy Palmer, Senior Vice President of Nissan Motor Company, spoke of *The Nissan Experience*, analyzing this Japan - UK success story in a time of great technological change. *Maritime Piracy* was another topical subject, on which members were briefed by Richard Neylon of the Admiralty department of Holman Fenwick Willan, who spoke of his experience acting for shipowners and underwriters in helping to resolve over seventy Somali hijacking cases. A special lunchtime discussion session was held, courtesy of Linklaters, with Lord Green, the Minister of Trade at the Department of Enterprise and Trade in advance of his visit to Japan, serving as an informal briefing and an opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest.

The Society was pleased to continue its 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 influential and informative guest speakers. In March, international author, Bill Emmott considered the *Fate of the Euro*, a subject which remained as topical at the end of the year as the beginning. In December, at a special lecture, kindly hosted by Aberdeen Asset Management, the subject was revisited by economist Andrew Smithers. The joint lunch series with JCCI continued with special guests Chris Aylett, the CEO of the Motorsport Industry Association in April and Lord Malloch-Brown, former Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who spoke about *The Economics of the Arab Spring*.

Just three days after the Great East Japan earthquake, we were delighted to welcome Mitoji Yabunaka, adviser to Nomura Research Institute and former Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs for a briefing at Nomura on Japanese foreign policy in Asia. Unsurprisingly, attention was focused on the situation in Tohoku, and Mr Yabunaka was able to give an up to date report on the situation immediately after the disaster.

In addition to the general business programme, the chairman held a series of small lunches for key figures from both the UK and Japan. These provided opportunities for decision makers to share ideas and information, and ensured that those involved in business and government were well informed on topical issues relating to the Japan-UK relationship in a global context. Guests of honour in 2011 were Barbara Woodward, International Director of UK Border Agency, Glen S. Fukushima, Chairman of Airbus Japan and Sir Peter Bonfield, Director of Sony Corporation. We are most grateful to member companies who hosted these events: HSBC, SJ Berwin and UBS respectively.

Activities appealing to all ages and interests

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. The monthly book club has built up a core of regular participants, who meet to discuss in an informal setting

books which are available in both English and Japanese. Although reading the same book, participants sometimes discover significant differences in the translation and enjoy discussing the way cultural background and expectation influences their interpretation. A special reading and discussion was held with *Who is Mr Satoshi?* author Jonathan Lee in July, where he reviewed the impact of time spent in Japan and work on his next novel.

Particularly noteworthy in August was the screening of a pair of films about people who were victims of the bombings of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, including *Twice Bombed*, which focused on the life of Tsutomu Yamaguchi. Director Hidetada Inazuka visited London for the screenings where he also answered questions and discussed the films with the audience.

Two contrasting evenings of performance took place: in February, *Hattallica*, a Metallica tribute band, entertained over one hundred enthusiastic fans, while in November, a similar number enjoyed Japanese vaudeville presented by Hayashiya Imamaru (paper cutting) and Sanshotei Charaku (rakugo). The Japan Society also partnered with Chinese and Korean organizations for a second East Asian Friendship charity event, featuring young musicians from the three countries.

Members also had opportunities to socialise over a number of tasting evenings, while supporting Japanese producers including Kosshu Wine and Niigata Sake Brewers Association. A more 'English' note was struck with a tea tasting at the East India Company. As usual, the Society also had seats for the Major General's Review two weeks before the official Trooping the Colour ceremony and organized a visit to the BADA Antiques and Fine Art Fair.

Following the success of the Japan Matsuri held in 2009 and 2010, which were jointly organized by the Japan Society with the Japan Association, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the UK and the Nippon Club, it was decided to set up a new company (Japan Matsuri) specifically to manage this planned annual event in London. The Japan Society is a corporate director of this company with Sean Curtin as its nominated representative on the board. The 2011 Japan Matsuri took place at County Hall

on London's Southbank on Sunday 18 September and was once again a major attraction for people of all ages interested in Japan. Collections were taken at the event in aid of the Japan Society Tohoku Earthquake Relief Fund.

The conversation group continues to play an important role in the Society, providing a valuable opportunity for members to maintain and develop their language skills. It allows Japanese and non-Japanese, members and non-members, to talk in a friendly and informal setting. Special events during the year, such as the hanami picnic, are always well-received. The Society's popular 10-week courses in intermediate Japanese continued, kindly hosted by Toray Europe. Participants included many who had returned from teaching in Japan and the cost remained low, so that anyone with the requisite level of Japanese was able to enrol and to maintain and improve their language skills.

London Lectures

The lectures programme continued to draw good audiences. The monthly academic lecture, held every third Monday, formed the core of this aspect of our public programming. The subjects of these lectures were varied and, in addition to those featured in this volume, included Martin Dusingberre's study of nuclear power in a specific local context, *Definitely in My Back Yard: Nuclear Power and Hometown Identity in Late Twentieth Century Japan*, Tom Gill speaking on *Japanese Homeless Men in International Comparative Perspective*, John Szostak on 'Art Historicism' and *Contemporary Japanese Art*, Ulrich Heinze who spoke on *Midwife and Manga Heroine: Oine Siebold, Nagasaki and the Birth of Modern Japan* and Sierk Horn whose subject was *Then and Now: Japanese Investment in the UK*. Many of these lectures were held at SOAS and we were grateful to the Japan Research Centre for its partnership in this series.

Beyond this monthly programme other talks and lectures were organized. Kenji Sakatsugi found links between the cities of London and Tokyo in his talk *Enough to Surprise Hiroshige*, 'One Hundred Famous Views of the City', while other topics ranged from Lafcadio

Hearn to subculture and its influence on innovation. The Society took opportunities to work in partnership with other organizations wherever possible including SOAS, Chelsea College of Art and Design and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, thus making these events open to a broad audience of members, students and the general public. The annual Carmen Blacker Lecture, in partnership with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, was another great success. The speaker, Professor Anne Bouchy, presents her research in this edition of *Proceedings*.

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. The board has reviewed the grants scheme and believes that by allocating relatively small sums to a wide range of projects, its objectives are being met. 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. In 2011, 25 grants were made averaging approximately £600 each. Of these some 13 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 partnership work with visiting students from the Tohoku region. Small grants enabled event organizers to put on events which introduced people in the UK to activities in Iwate and other parts of Tohoku after the earthquake, showing how the recovery was being managed and focusing on regional culture and artistic exchange. A study day by the Scottish Garden Society and a film festival on Shugendo by the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, SOAS, each made specialist subjects accessible to a general audience. Support was also given to community Japan Days in London (Japan Matsuri and 'With Children For Children' at the Unicorn Theatre), Essex and Cambridge.

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.

The national curriculum in England is undergoing major review but opportunities will remain across the curriculum and through extra curricular activity for young people to experience a range of cultures, ideas, and historical contexts. Through its schools education programme, the Society supports teachers who may have limited experience of Japan themselves in providing these opportunities for their students.

On a day to day basis, 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 provides materials directly to schools throughout the country. Loan resources are supplied to approximately 70 schools each year. There were also over 6,000 unique visits to the website to download free resources.

Other targeted activities included:

Sixth form study day

Over 100 sixth form students of Japanese and their teachers attended a one-day conference which aimed to provide 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.

Japan in Your Classroom visits

During the year visits were made by volunteers in Greater London, Brighton, Derby, Manchester and South Wales to over 70 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. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake in March, there was particular interest in providing pupils with a general introduction to Japan beyond the images of destruction. Many schools managed to make contact independently with local Japanese residents and combined their visits with fundraising activities. A day of workshops with paper cutter Imamaru Hayashiya was organized in November.

School links

Support for school links has continued to be an important element of the Society's work with schools. A number of new links were established, while a workshop was held by the chief executive and the head of education in northern Kyoto prefecture to provide advice and support to a group of schools linked with partners in Swindon. It was particularly encouraging to see a number of longer established links developing further. Plans were in train at the end of 2011 for a visit by 10 elementary school students from Hyogo Prefecture to their partner school in Gateshead. During their stay in January 2012, the children took part in successful homestays and gave a performance of Yosakoi Soran at the Metro Centre to express their thanks for British support at the time of the earthquake.



Children from Seka Elementary School performing at the Metro Centre in Gateshead