

The Japan Society Year in Review 2018

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2018 was a period of change, innovation and consolidation for the Japanese community in London. The Japan Society marked the 150th anniversary of the Meiji restoration, collaborated on major work to highlight the 100 plus years of Japanese history behind Hammersmith Park, and joined celebrations for the opening of the newly opened Japan House. At the end of 2018, Sir David Warren stood down at the end of six years as Chairman; we marked the transition at the annual dinner and Christmas party, where members had the chance to thank David for his leadership of the Society and to welcome Bill Emmott to his new role. The Society was saddened by death in August of former chairman Sir Hugh Cortazzi, whose obituary is published elsewhere in this volume and on the website, together with tributes from many of those who had known and worked with him.

The business network

Inevitably perhaps, the business events programme in 2018 again included a large proportion of events with a focus on the implications of the UK leaving the European Union, though also included sessions on other topical issues. The Chairman held a series of lunches hosted by corporate members, in which key figures were invited to meet senior members of the Society. These events 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. The three guests of honour in 2018 provided insights and analysis on issues around Brexit: Sir Martin Donnelly, former Permanent Secretary for the Department for International Trade; The Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, and Bobby McDonagh, Former Irish Ambassador to the UK, Italy and the EU.

Other business lectures and seminars were also generously hosted by corporate members of the Society, or organized in partnership with others. During the year, these included a seminar by Alastair Morgan, British Ambassador to Pyongyang, who gave a briefing on the situation in

North Korea and the implications for security in the region; by Watanabe Hiroshi, President of the Institute for International Monetary Affairs, and by Hirose Naomi, Executive Vice Chairman, Fukushima Affairs, TEPCO, who gave an update on the management of the Fukushima accident. At the end of his first year as British Ambassador to Japan, Paul Madden spoke about the work of the Embassy and developments in the UK-Japan relationship. (The transcript of this lecture was printed in *Proceedings* 154.)

The Society organised two joint lunches in conjunction with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the UK, at which guest speakers were the Japanese Ambassador, and Graham Stuart MP, Minister for Investment.

The general events programme

As always, the Society's general programme in 2018 included events designed to reflect the diverse interests and enthusiasms of its members.

The conversation group under the leadership of its active sub-committee continues to play an important role in the Society, providing a valuable opportunity for participants 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. In addition to the regular monthly meetings, the conversation group organizes occasional special events, such as the annual *hanami* picnic, as well as participating jointly in other Society events. Another long-running monthly fixture is the book club, which meets on the second Monday of the month to discuss a wide range of books including literary classics, anthologies and contemporary fiction. In April, we marked the publication of the Society's most recent publication, *Heaven's Wind* with a discussion including translator and editor, Angus Turvill. This followed the official launch event, where we were delighted to welcome Professor Jay Rubin for an illuminating discussion with Angus Turvill on the challenges of translating contemporary and classical authors (fig.1).

Other events included gallery talks and museum visits, cultural workshops, food and drink tastings, and social events. We were delighted to partner with the Japan Foundation on an extremely popular event with Kinashi Noritake, while members enjoyed a more contemplative



Fig. 1 Book Launch of Heaven's Wind (March 2018)

With editor and translator Angus Turvill (right) and Professor Jay Rubin (left)

atmosphere as they visited APT Gallery for a private view of *Travels in a Paper Coat*, a collaborative exhibition between artists Miura Isao and Nikolai Azariah with poet Chris Beckett. In April, Machida Toru, head concierge at The Savoy, described his own journey from arrival in the UK to his current role anticipating the needs of guests at one of London's top hotels.

In a lecture-demonstration in February, award-winning pastry-chef, Aoyama Suzue, spoke about her training and experience working in top UK establishments, while treating attendees to a mouth-watering selection of savoury and sweet snacks. Tastebuds were stimulated again in May, with a special supper club event with Silla Bjerrum to celebrate the launch of her book *Robata*. Food provided the backdrop to a discussion of the art of film making with screenwriter Mukai Kosuke, whose film *Gukoroku – Traces of Sin* opened the Japan Foundation's touring film programme 2018.

We would like to congratulate Merryn Wilshier, the first female winner of the Japan Society Golf Tournament in June, and the Japan

Society team, captained by Ambassador Tsuruoka, who retained the Collar Cup in the annual match against the JCCI in October. We are grateful to BDO LLP for its continued support of these two events.

The Japan Society collaborated with the Japanese Embassy and the Japanese business community in London, in managing the installation of a new gate and avenue of stone lanterns at the Japanese garden in Hammersmith Park. These formally recognise the history of this garden, originally constructed as part of the 1910 Japan British Exhibition. A ceremony was held to celebrate these additions and to share the history of this garden, attended by Ambassador Tsuruoka, the Mayor and Councillors from Hammersmith & Fulham Borough Council, representatives of the Japanese community in London, and sponsoring companies. Despite last minute postponement due to bad weather, many members of the local community and the Japanese community in London returned to the Park the following week for a Japanese Garden Party, enjoying warm sunshine, music, Japanese food and cultural activities (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Japanese Garden Party at Hammersmith Park (August 2018)

The 10th annual Japan Matsuri was held in Trafalgar Square on 30 September. The Japan Society has a formal role as Corporate Director of the Japan Matsuri company, with Heidi Potter its nominated board representative. On the 150th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration, the theme this year was Community, celebrating the long links between London and Japan, with many of those who had studied in London having played key roles in Japan's Meiji Government. Rooted in the UK's Japan-related community, Japan Matsuri always showcases performances by local schools and community groups, ranging from yosakoi dance, Okinawan eisa, and street dance. The event would not be complete without Japanese festival food, stalls introducing a range of products and services, and activities for all the family.

London Lectures

The lectures programme as usual covered a wide range of subject matter. In January, a one-day conference organized with the Victorian Society marked Meiji at 150 by examining the links between Meiji Japan and Victorian Britain, with panels on diplomacy, exhibitions, the visual arts, and home and garden. Martin Dusinberre set the scene from a historical and global perspective at the beginning of the day, while in closing, novelist Natasha Pulley brought Meiji to London with a discussion of the inspirations behind *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*. This was followed in September by a seminar, the Society's first event held at the newly opened Japan House, in which a panel of speakers including novelist Lesley Downer, historian Ian Ruxton, and diplomat David Warren, each brought their own perspectives to an assessment of Meiji from a British angle (fig. 3).

The monthly lecture series formed the core of this aspect of our public programming and the Society is grateful to all the speakers who generously share their research. Subjects in 2018 included: the art of Japanese basketry; the North Korean community in Japan; the role of the Kōmeitō in Japanese political life; the story of Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram and cherry blossom in Japan; the translation of science in Meiji Japan and the influence of its translators; Oswald White and the Japan Consular Service; British influence on Japanese archaeology; photographic magazines in 1930s Japan; presentation of history in



Fig. 3 The Meiji Restoration from a British Perspective (September 2018)
With Lesley Downer, Ian Ruxton and Sir David Warren (image) at Japan House London

Japanese and Chinese school textbooks; the films of Imamura Shōhei in the context of the Japanese studio system; and Tango in 20th century Japan. The 9th annual lecture in memory of Dr Carmen Blacker took place in London and Norwich, organized jointly with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, with Professor Peter Nosco speaking on Individuality in Modern Japan.

Coinciding with the exhibition *Positive Energies* at the OXO Tower in May, we were delighted to welcome an expert panel to explore issues relating to disability and social inclusion in Japan and the UK. Speakers included parents, teachers and photographers, who looked at the role of schools, technological innovation and art in breaking down barriers.

Japan Society Small Grants

In 2018 £20,000 was given in grants to support 25 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 Japan Society has no regular contact. Priority is given to applications for grassroots projects and for activities involving schools and other educational establishments.

Twelve grants were awarded for projects taking place in schools or for activity involving young people. This included Taiko drumming workshops for children at a primary school in Brighton, complementing the activities of the school's Japan Club; and the third annual 'Fuji Festival' in Edinburgh enabling Scottish school children to participate in karate, sushi making, origami workshops, music and other Japan related activities. Whitley Academy presented its students with a unique insight into life in Tokyo through a performance by Tokyo-based theatre company, Tarinainanika specialising in corporeal mime. The performance was followed by workshops, which gave the students the opportunity to try out corporeal mime for themselves, as well as a Q&A session and interviews with the group.

During one project in rural Northern Ireland, local traditional Irish musicians collaborated with experienced shinobue and taiko drum facilitators to learn a traditional Japanese piece of music, through which they were able to discover both the similarities and differences between their cultural traditions. The piece was in turn taught to local children and young people who went on to perform on the showcase stage at the 2018 Foyle O-bon Festival.

Scored in Silence, a digital artwork and performance piece by deaf concept artist, Minamimura Chisato, gave over 50 deaf and hearing young people the opportunity to learn of the experience of deaf *hibakusha* (survivors of the atomic bomb). A project by Clod Ensemble shared learning about Noh with artists and the general public through events, workshops and online resources; and *Flight Paths*, a collaborative production telling the stories of three visually impaired artists and their migration to the UK, used Japan Society small grant funding to create an online digital resource to provide background and context for the show as it toured the UK in early 2019. (fig. 4)

Small grants were also given in support of a series of workshops including tenugui screen printing, wood block printing and haiku run by the West Yorkshire Print Workshop in conjunction with its Japanese summer exhibition; a Japanese translation workshop at the School of



Fig. 4 *Flight Paths* (Spring 2019)
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Modern Languages in Cardiff; the 2018 Japanese Avant-Garde and Experimental Film Festival, and Japan Now 2018, a festival exploring contemporary Japanese literature, film and culture.

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.

A workshop in Cardiff in May focused on opportunities for cross-curricular work on Japan through haiku, sport and manga. In October, a Japan Conference for Schools, organized with the Japan Foundation and hosted by the British Council, gave teachers the opportunity to meet counterparts to share information and participate in workshops and discussion groups. Topics covered in 2018 included manga as a gateway to learning; curriculum ideas for the secondary classroom; teaching maths through Japanese; and art in the Japanese classroom. Looking toward Tokyo 2020, the keynote speech was given by Rebecca Bolland, co-ordinator of the Coventry Young Ambassadors project.

During the year some 40 visits were made by volunteers in Greater London, Brighton, Derby, Manchester and South Wales. 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.

Support for school links has continued to be an important element of the Society's work. During 2018, Takamatsu Daiichi Senior High School again carried out a science-based exchange with County Upper School, Bury St Edmunds, and Newstead Wood School, London. Annual exchange visits took place from Komaki Elementary School, Nagano, to schools in Nottingham and between staff at Reepham Primary School, Norfolk and Sakado Azuma Kindergarten in Saitama.

A Sixth Form study day was held in London in November, in partnership with Ritsumeikan University and SOAS (fig. 5). Over 100 students and staff participated in a day of lectures and workshops on Japanese themes. 2018 workshops included language, food, sport, manga and art, while lectures gave insights into applied uses of Japanese. Author and life coach, Beth Kempton spoke about her journey from Japanese at Durham University, to participation in major sporting and cultural events in Japan and beyond, while Professor Hashimoto Takeshi gave insights into health and sports research at Ritsumeikan University. The day concluded with first-hand accounts of a study abroad year by current students of Japanese, while representatives from fourteen universities throughout the UK were on hand throughout the day to provide information on opportunities for further study.



Fig. 5 Sixth Form Japan Day (November 2018)
At SOAS, University of London

Japan Society Publications

Two new publications were released in 2018. *Heaven's Wind*, an anthology of short stories by five contemporary women writers, with translation in parallel text format and an extended essay by translator, Angus Turvill, was formally launched in March. *British Foreign Secretaries and Japan 1850-1990* was launched at the Society's Annual General Meeting in July, with presentations by co-editors Hugh Cortazzi and Antony Best. Work continued on *British Royal and Japanese Imperial Relations* and on a reprint of *The Thames and I*, a translation of the future Emperor's memoir of his time studying at Oxford, both for 2019 publication.

Aims of the Japan Society

The vision that drives the Society's annual activity is the enhancement of understanding of Japanese life and culture and of links between the UK and Japan. This informs all areas of the 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 our library, or the programme of small grants made in support of Japan-related projects that are organized by others.

The board regularly reviews the Society's activity to ensure that its key objectives are being met as well as to confirm their continuing relevance. In the aftermath of the UK's decision to leave the EU, and with increasing global tendencies for nations to look inward, the Society's role in creating bridges and fostering professional and personal networks is as important as ever. The Trustees always bear in mind the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and consider this when planning and evaluating our activities and in ensuring that a significant proportion is accessible to the wider community beyond the Society's membership. Many events are open to non-members, while the schools education programme and the small grants scheme extend throughout the UK, beyond the Society's base in London.

The Society encourages any who have an interest in Japan and the broad UK-Japan relationship to become members and participate in activities. Reduced membership fees for students and those under 25 years of age are set in order to make membership accessible to the next generation, who will take the relationship forward in the coming years. In recent years we have noticed a tendency for people to sign up to receive newsletters, or to follow the Society on social media, without becoming members.