

The magazine of the  
British Chamber of  
Commerce in Japan

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# January 2019

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To strengthen business ties between Britain and Japan, promote and support the business interests of all our Members, and actively encourage new business entrants into the Japanese market as well as Japanese investment into the UK.

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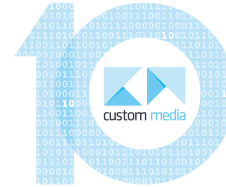
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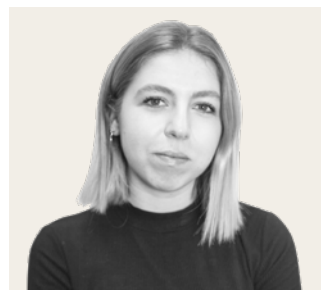
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## 2019: Busy year ahead

BY PAUL MADDEN CMG  
BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN  
PHOTOS: BRITISH EMBASSY TOKYO



**A** *kemashite omedeto!* Happy New Year, everyone! I hope *ACUMEN* readers all had a good break over the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

After Australian and Singaporean Christmases in my previous two postings, it's good to have Christmas actually falling in winter, as did those I grew up with in England. I know that, for most Japanese, it's just another working day, but parts of Tokyo looked quite festive and Midnight Mass at the Franciscan Chapel Center in Roppongi—with its Filipino choir—was a great reminder of the essence of Christmas.

With the Residence festooned with Christmas decorations, we hosted a number of festive events, including dinners with senior Japanese officials and businesspeople, where chef Freddie served up Turkey and the full trimmings. Many of our guests, such as Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda, commented that it reminded them of their time as students in the UK.

### Kansai Christmas

I also managed to get down to Osaka to co-host the British Consulate General's big Christmas reception there with our Consul General Sarah Wooten. It was very well attended by locals, who have a wide range of connections with the UK—political, business and academic—and included rugby legend Toshiyuki Hayashi. I don't know whether it's just me believing stereotypes, but parties seem to be a little more lively down in Kansai.

Whilst in Osaka, I visited Panasonic's new museum, opened in 2018 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the firm's founding by Konosuke Matsushita. Panasonic is a significant investor in the UK.

### UK-Japan meetings

I was back in London briefly just before Christmas, where I met International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, Asia Minister Mark Field and Sports Minister Mims Davies. I also visited the global headquarters of SoftBank's Vision Fund, which is investing \$100 billion in technology firms from its Mayfair base.

Back in Tokyo, I called on Tadashi Yanai, founder and president of Fast Retailing Co. Ltd., who are behind the Uniqlo stores. They have a significant presence in the UK with their European headquarters, and a number of stores in London and other cities. I told him that my family are regular customers.

Professor David Richardson, the University of East Anglia's vice-chancellor, came through Tokyo in December, together with Dr Simon Kaner, director of the university's Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures. The institute is home to one of the largest pools of expertise on Japanese arts anywhere in the world outside Japan.

This year will, literally, be the start of a new era, with the Emperor abdicating on 30 April

### Seasonal stars

Mansai Nomura, the famous Kyogen actor and movie star, came to call on me at the Residence. He has also staged Kyogen and Noh versions of some of Shakespeare's plays. He spent 1994 studying in the UK, and is now the creative director for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and I'm sure he is going to present spectacular events for both.

### Diplomatic dining

Once a year, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hosts a lunch for Japanese-speaking ambassadors serving in Tokyo. There are about 25 of us among the 150 or so ambassadors here. Most have made a long-term commitment to Japan, with several postings under their belt and many have Japanese partners. It is a rare privilege to have the opportunity to engage with the prime minister in this format. He was in the UK for meetings with Prime Minister Theresa May in early January.

My wife Sarah and I were once again invited to attend two annual events at the Imperial Palace over the Christmas period. On 23 December, I put on my morning suit and, together with fellow members of the diplomatic corps, went to pay our respects on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday. As we mingled with members of the Imperial Family, many of whom had studied in the UK, it was a little sad to recall that this was His Majesty's last birthday as Emperor. On 1 January, the ambassadors were all back at the palace again for an audience to mark the New Year. We saw in the New Year at Suntory Hall, watching British conductor Alex Joel and the Vienna Volksoper Orchestra performing a selection of Viennese waltzes.

### Busy months ahead

The start of a new year is always a time of hope and expectation. It helps that, in Japan, it is usually accompanied by blue skies and sunshine. This year is going to be an exceptionally busy one for Japan. On 28–29 June, world leaders will gather in Osaka for the G20 Summit. There will also be some eight meetings of ministers—covering a range of issues, from finance to agriculture—held in cities around the country during the year.

Japan aims to use its G20 presidency to pursue a number of themes, including economic growth and promotion of the rules-based multilateral trading system. Later, in Yokohama from 28 to 30 August, Prime Minister Abe will host the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development, involving many leaders from African nations.

### Heisei farewell

This year will, literally, be the start of a new era, with the Emperor abdicating on 30 April and handing the throne to his Oxford-educated son, Crown Prince Naruhito. The formal enthronement ceremony follows later in the year, on 22 October. I was living in Japan exactly 30 years ago at the time of the death of the Showa Emperor and the enthronement of the



With rugby legend Toshiyuki "Destroyer" Hayashi

current Emperor. It felt like a very historical moment, as Emperor Hirohito had been on the throne for 64 years, during periods of major change and upheaval in Japan. So, I feel fortunate to be back here once again to witness an imperial transition.

### Field favourites

For Brits here, particularly, one of the highlights of 2019 will be the Rugby World Cup (RWC), which will run from 20 September to 2 November at 12 venues around Japan. Many of my visitors tell me that they will "have to" come back for important business in Japan around that time. With England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland all here, the British Embassy Tokyo and Consulate-General Osaka will be busy assisting the teams, supporting the tens of thousands of travelling British fans (we've already started our digital consular awareness campaign) and seeking opportunities to promote the UK. We will also be launching our UK in Japan 2019–20, which will run from the RWC through to the Olympics and Paralympics. It's definitely going to be a busy year for us.

Finally, many congratulations to British School Tokyo Principal Brian Christian for his well-deserved MBE, announced in the New Year's Honours. 🇬🇧





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# Week is long time in politics and publishing

SIMON FARRELL | [simon@custom-media.com](mailto:simon@custom-media.com)

With one finger almost poised over the print button for the first issue of *ACUMEN* in 2019, we learnt that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was going to London—the next day. News soon leaked that he would announce the end of Japan’s 23-year ban on selling British beef and lamb. Then, just when we thought Brexit couldn’t get more confusing, divisive and uncertain ...

So here is your January 2019 issue, a bit late but more up to date.

On 10 January, Abe and Prime Minister Theresa May appeared at Downing Street to announce UK beef and lamb sales in Japan will be worth about £127mn over the next five years, “supporting farmers from the valleys of South Wales to the Highlands of Scotland”. International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, a regular visitor to Tokyo, said, “This deal brings significant benefits to producers across the UK at a time when British food and drink exports are at a record high.” Read more on page 18.

On cue came enthusiastic tweets and press releases about other new bilateral deals, plans and record numbers from sectors as diverse as defence, tourism, arts, culture, charity, sports, autos, toys, science and horticulture.



PHOTO: CUSTOM MEDIA

With Japanese firms employing 150,000 people in Britain, and combined trade of £28bn over the past 12 months, here are some of the other recent bilateral gigs:

- Classic niche marque Norton Motorcycles, established in 1908, seals five-year exclusive deal that will support 200 jobs in the East Midlands
- Hamleys, the world’s oldest and largest toy retailer, recently entered Japan, opening in Yokohama and Fukuoka to add to its Regent Street flagship store
- Downing Street gonged London-based Aid For Japan founder Akemi Solloway Tanaka for helping orphans of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake
- Edinburgh scientists are to collaborate with Japanese AI and robotics researchers
- Thanks to easier entry requirements and British Airways’ new non-stop Osaka to London route starting in April (page 38), Japanese tourists could number 270,000 (the most since 2007) this year, with 9% more visitors spending £35mn more than in 2017
- The National Gallery, London to send major exhibition to Tokyo
- More combined military exercises at sea and on land and air, including a visit to Japan by HMS *Montrose* to help enforce North Korea sanctions

With Brexit looming, some cynics are again quoting William Shakespeare’s ubiquitous line from *Richard III*: “Now is the winter of discontent”. So, if you are heading to Hakuba, Nagano Prefecture, for the 4th annual Inter-Chamber Ski Race on 26 January—supported by the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan—and are seeking light relief you might want to stay at the delightfully eccentric, but warm and friendly, Shakespeare Hotel.

I don’t know who is behind the hotel, but, after spending the recent New Year’s holiday there, I can confirm it has engaging quirkiness



PHOTO: FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

On cue came enthusiastic tweets and press releases about other new bilateral deals

and character, as well as icicles thicker and longer than my arms cascading from the gutters.

This landmark also features The Globe Bar—favoured by skiers for its classic ambience, bar games, Hemlock and Capsulet cocktails as well as bangers and mash—and a totally over-the-top Othello restaurant, named after the Bard’s circa-1600 tragedy and recently founded by a Japanese Michelin-starred chef. The hotel, bar and restaurant boast inviting log fires, Gothic arches, high and low timber beams, dark corners and church-like leaded windows. ❄️

# MEDIA

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## Hitachi to delay work on Welsh, Gloucs nuclear plants

The Japanese firm said it will suspend work on a multi-billion-pound UK nuclear project because of rising costs, the BBC reported on 17 January. The decision puts thousands of jobs at risk if the £13bn plant at Wylfa Newydd in Anglesey, north Wales, is scrapped. The firm had been in talks with the UK government since June about funding for the project, which was being built by its Horizon subsidiary. The government said it had failed to agree terms with Hitachi. The nuclear industry said it was “disappointing”. Hitachi said it would also suspend work on another site, in Oldbury in Gloucestershire, “until a solution can be found”. About 9,000 workers had been expected to be involved in building the two nuclear reactors, which were due to be operational by the mid-2020s. Hitachi said the decision would cost it an estimated ¥300bn (£2.1bn) as “extraordinary losses”. It said it was suspending the project “from the viewpoint of its economic rationality as a private enterprise”.

## Sterling seesaw after Nomura call

After Prime Minister Theresa May pulled a parliamentary vote on the Brexit deal she struck with the European Union, the value of the pound took a crash. *The Daily Express* reported on 4 January that Japanese investment bank Nomura has issued a renewed call to buy the pound. This comes as it recovers from a plummet and a Nomura currency strategist said that negative viewpoints toward Sterling are exaggerated—and mainly charged by Brexit uncertainty. Predictions are that it would be difficult for Sterling to weaken further, and the currency was up again in mid-January following the Brexit votes in Parliament.



## Tokyo LGBT photo project to start in Britain

A young lesbian couple from Japan is planning to take marriage photos in a variety of locations, beginning with Britain in March 2019. According to *PinkNews*, a UK-based online publication dedicated to LGBT issues, the women, who have crowdfunded their trip, aim to take photos of themselves in all 26 countries that support marriage equality to protest Japan’s outdated LGBTQ+ laws.

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## Conwy and Himeji City to twin

The Conwy town council has put together a draft of a twinning agreement which would see the small North Wales town twinned with the Kansai city of Himeji, in Hyogo Prefecture. According to the *North Wales Pioneer*, the accord—set to be signed in October 2020—is a follow-on from the twinning of the castles Conwy and Himeji in July 2018. The draft outlines key points, such as how to promote sustainable tourism, improve language skills, encourage contacts between Conwy and Himeji, and establish a strong friendship between residents. City Councillor Bill Chapman said the establishment of formal ties will contribute to international understanding and present commercial opportunities.

## Harajuku buyer seen at top London fashion show

London Fashion Week Men's was a three-day event, held January 5-7, featuring a variety of up-and-coming brands and established designers, such as London-born Craig Green. Fashion business journal *Drapers* reported that a number of influential fashion buyers were spotted this season, including Tokyo's GR8, located in Harajuku.

## Queen film a hit in Japan

*Bohemian Rhapsody*, the Golden Globe-winning biographic film that explores the rise of British rock band Queen and the life of lead singer Freddie Mercury, has proven a phenomenon in Japan. According to *The Washington Post*, Japan's box office haul is among the top globally, and the website Box Office Mojo ranks Japan fourth globally with receipts of \$56 million, out-selling even the band's native Britain.

Queen was always popular in Japan, where their 1975 tour helped propel them to worldwide fame. Japanese theatres are giving viewers a chance to sing and dance along to the movie. A tabloid, *Nikkan Gendai Digital*, even published an article suggesting three "tricks" to sound more like Mercury when singing his songs in karaoke bars. 🇬🇧



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## New Year notes

Step up your participation in 2019

LORI HENDERSON MBE

**H**appy New Year to all members of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) and readers of *ACUMEN!* Like much of Japan's workforce, we at the BCCJ returned to our desks on 7 January all set to charge ahead on a number of projects in the Year of the Boar.

### Online revamp

This month we are circulating a request for proposal for the redevelopment of the BCCJ website. The current site was conceived in 2011 and built in 2012, following impassioned discussions between myself, then-President Philip Gibb OBE and the executive committee (Excom). The chamber and the site have come a long way since that time, with traffic having risen from about 100 to nearly 20,000 users per month.

At its monthly meeting last July, Excom decided that a new site should be designed to more clearly reflect our business objectives and present a fit-for-purpose shop-face for the chamber during an exceptionally important time in UK-Japan relations.

The site should make it easier for you and all members to book events for yourself and on behalf of your colleagues. It should also enable you to more easily access business intel in the

BCCJ archives, as well as keep up to date with developments on topics such as Brexit.

Proposals should be sent to the BCCJ office by noon on 31 January. More information can be found at [www.bccjapan.com](http://www.bccjapan.com)

### Leaders

Have you ever considered standing for a leadership role at the BCCJ? Is there a UK-Japan commercial cause that really matters to you?

BCCJ Excom determines the shape and strategic direction of the chamber and ultimately influences the bilateral business relationship.

This year, our Excom nomination period will run from 18 February to 15 March, during which time the BCCJ office will be accepting completed nomination forms, including pledges from each candidate stating how he or she intends to serve the BCCJ membership during the coming year. In particular, we value nominations from female candidates. We are also seeking nominations from those who can drive forward projects such

as our Rugby Alliance and the 2019 British Business Awards.

The election period will then take place from 27 March to 10 April. BCCJ members can vote for their 2019-20 Excom by online poll, post or proxy.

The election results will be revealed on the evening of 24 April at our Annual General Meeting, to be held this year at the Roppongi Hills Club.

### Refresh your reps

Who's currently representing your firm at BCCJ events and meetings? Take a moment to review and possibly refresh your BCCJ delegate list. Platinum members can register unlimited numbers of BCCJ members, Corporates can list up to 12, and Entrepreneurs up to three. If you find you have spaces available in your list, we encourage you to register your firm's rising stars, including women and perhaps leaders from your firm's diversity and inclusion network. The idea is to sign up a diverse line-up of delegates so that they can interact with the BCCJ network and bring back new knowledge, energy and business leads to your firm. Your choices really do make a difference to the strength and relevance of our community.

Here's to a magnificent and meaningful year ahead! 🇬🇧

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# Promise ahead

Great things are coming in 2019

DAVID BICKLE | @BCCJ\_President

As we enter 2019, we look ahead at what promises to be a momentous year for Japan and the UK, and for relations between the two countries. Japan will witness the end of the Heisei Era on 30 April with the abdication of Emperor Akihito, one of the few surviving monarchs to have been present at the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The country will then celebrate the ascension of Crown Prince Naruhito to the throne. In June, Osaka will hold the G20 Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy, designed to help advance global economic cooperation.

#### Sporting chance

Later in the year, straddling an expected rise in the consumption tax, Japan will host the Rugby World Cup—a six-week jamboree to thrill sports fans—which will hopefully foster more inclusive communities that embrace opportunities for global business and exchange. The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) and seven other foreign chambers of commerce, together known as the Rugby Alliance, are working to help this become part of the tournament's legacy.

Looking at the UK, the process of determining the country's future relationship with the EU will

move forward. At the time of writing, uncertainties remain, but it is nevertheless clear that the UK will continue to be open to trade, investment and exchange with Europe and the rest of the world. To date, the UK government has listened closely to the wishes of Japanese investors in the British economy and will surely continue to do so.

#### Celebrations and honours

In tandem with business challenges, 2019 brings cause for celebration to a number of BCCJ members. British Airways marks its centenary, and Airbus will deliver the first of its magnificent A350s to the UK flag-carrier. Congratulations are also due to Brian Christian MBE, headmaster of the British School in Tokyo, who was recognised in the Queen's New Year Honours for services to education and the community in Tokyo. This is a fine reminder that education—through the quality of teaching professionals and institutions, both at home and abroad—is one of the UK's great sources of competitive advantage.

Another area of competitive advantage is UK excellence in technology. It is for services to this sector that the list of New Year Honours also includes Mustafa Suleyman CBE. Suleyman is a co-founder, with Demis Hassabis CBE, of

Another area of competitive advantage is UK excellence in technology.

DeepMind Technologies Limited, the pioneering firm in the field of artificial intelligence. Both are brilliant, visionary British entrepreneurs, and the UK is fortunate to have such innovators to inspire the next generation of technologists from among the country's diversity of talent. That diversity itself is yet another source of competitive advantage.

#### Bright outcome

A more diverse and inclusive workplace, greater technological innovation and the proliferation of socially responsible business practices have the potential for a disproportionately positive impact on sustainable economic growth in Japan and the UK. The BCCJ will continue to promote such outcomes in 2019. In doing so, we look forward to connecting our members with people who matter, and hope that the months ahead bring happiness, health and prosperity to all those members and their colleagues, clients and customers. 🇬🇧

## SPORTS [in] Japan

### Japan Gives Rugby a Try

Before the Rugby World Cup 2019 kicks off, In Japan TV spoke with rugby stars Hitoshi Ono (Brave Blossoms) and Hiroyuki Misaka (Japan Wheelchair Rugby), as well as coaches and VIPs to discuss the sport's famed teamwork and diversity, plus how it creates business opportunities in Japan.

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# JAPAN-BRITISH SOCIETY AWARDS

Royal tribute for charity founder and ballet star

BY SIMON FARRELL  
PHOTOS BY YUSUKE FUJIMOTO



At the 2018 Japan-British Society (JBS) annual gala dinner on 4 December at the Imperial Hotel Tokyo, HIH Princess Akiko of Mikasa presented awards to two big names in bilateral ties.

Each year, the JBS recognises “significant work in the field of Japanese-British relations by individuals and organisations that has not otherwise been acknowledged”. One Briton and one Japanese are awarded.

Founded in 1908, “to encourage the study of things British and promote cordial relations between the peoples of the United Kingdom and Japan”, the JBS has about 1,700 members and is supported by Japanese and British firms.

After the guest speech by Hiroshi Nakaso, former deputy governor of the Bank of Japan and president of the Daiwa Institute of Research Ltd., the winners were announced to the 159 guests: Rob Williams, co-founder of fundraising charity cycling team Knights in White Lycra (KIWL), and Royal Ballet Principal Miyako Yoshida OBE.

As the one who had nominated Williams, aged 53, for the JBS award, I asked him how it all began: “Overweight and over here about six years ago, I was sitting morosely in a central Tokyo British pub with a few like-minded compatriots discussing football, families and fast-expanding waistlines. Shamefully trying to cover our tragic beer guts spilling over our straining belts, we bantered about how to get fit fast and forever. But we needed more motivation than our own selfish desire to look and feel good. Ironically, the more ale we drank, the better our ideas were and like many Brits, we wanted to tie our efforts to a good cause”.

With sad memories of the earthquake and tsunami of 11 March, 2011, still fresh in their minds, the Brits decided to take Norman Tebbit’s much-maligned advice—and get on their bikes. Destination and mission? “Fukushima Prefecture, to raise badly needed funds for the survivors living in temporary accommodation”.







Rob Williams and 36 other bikers visited an Iwate Prefecture children's home after a 500km ride in June 2018.

Boisterous singing and beer drinking played a part in naming the cycling team Knights in White Lycra (KIWL), after the famous 1960s hit, "Nights in White Satin", by the UK rock band the Moody Blues. The team members had bonded over the song in a Roppongi karaoke bar just weeks before. It is a name that, Williams says, "we thought we would never use again beyond that one ride".

In April 2013, they cycled 330km to Minamisoma to raise funds for a local project to provide food and water to occupants of temporary accommodation. "Elated by the personal achievement and moved greatly by the plight of the survivors and their stoicism, we decided to repeat the ride in 2014. But we rode further, to Minamisanriku, to support the recovery of the town's children. It was impossible to conceive when we first started KIWL but, six years on, KIWL has raised over ¥52 million for disadvantaged and displaced children in Japan. We are now more than just a cycling group; we also arrange Futsal tournaments, marathons, walks, and quiz nights".

The group's focus now is on raising funds for the some 30,000 abused, neglected and orphaned children living in care homes in Japan. "Through the charity we support, we are able to help facilitate the education of children in digital

literacy and computer programming and coding, to give them practical and employable skills for adult life. This gives them more hope of a better outcome in adult life, and makes them positive contributors to their local communities in Japan.

"This year's 500km ride on June 13-16 is all about the word 'new': new route, new charity ([www.youmewenpo.org](http://www.youmewenpo.org)) and new riders. We are particularly keen to involve more women and I am delighted we have a good number who have already applied for the ride. We also seek corporate sponsors to place logos on the jerseys of our 45 riders. One hundred percent of donations benefit YouMeWe, and from a CSR perspective it promotes the positive idea of getting fit and giving back".

"I accept this award not as an individual, but on behalf of all the men and women—British, Japanese and others—who have generously participated in our activities over the years, the corporate sponsors who have so generously supported our efforts, and the individual donors themselves, who have supported the participants. This award is for all of them. I am greatly humbled to receive such a prestigious award in the presence of Her Imperial Highness Princess Akiko of Mikasa. Thank you very much".



*Raymonda*, New National Theatre Tokyo, 2004  
PHOTO: HIDEEMI SETO

Miyako Yoshida, aged 53, has performed as a principal—the highest level of ballet in the UK—for 22 years, including 15 years at the Royal Ballet. In addition to pleasing audiences and inspiring young dancers of both genders and nations, Yoshida has taught and mentored the next generation of dancers, notably through the TV series *Super Ballet Lesson*, where she passed on the UK style of classical ballet choreography.

Born, raised and trained in Tokyo, Yoshida won the Prix de Lausanne in 1983 and later joined the UK's Royal Ballet School. In 1984, she joined the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, in 1990 renamed the Birmingham Royal Ballet, and was promoted to principal in 1988. The following year, she was honoured with the Global Award and the Arts Encouragement Prize for Artists by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (since 1988 known as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology).

In 1995, Yoshida joined The Royal Ballet as principal dancer and is known for her partnership with such stars as Tetsuya Kumakawa and Irek Mukhamedov. She was appointed UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2001 and, three years later, married Takashi Endo, a Japanese football agent.

In 2006, Yoshida joined Japan's K-ballet Company—which holds about 50 events each year—while continuing to dance with The Royal Ballet, before winning the UK's National Dance Award for Best Female Dancer. In 2007, she was appointed to the Order of the British Empire for services to dance. In 2010 she retired from the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden.

The New National Theatre Tokyo announced last year that she had agreed to be its artistic director for ballet and dance from September 2020. 🇬🇧

Hiroshi Nakaso, former deputy  
governor of the Bank of Japan  
and president of the Daiwa  
Institute of Research Ltd.



# MOOOOVE OVER, WAGYU

British beef and lamb are back in Japan!

BY JULIAN RYALL



Restaurant owners, hotel chefs and purveyors of high-end meats across Japan are licking their lips at the prospect of, once again, being able to serve prime cuts of British beef and lamb to customers who appreciate the taste and texture of a superior slice.

Taste buds were set tingling when, during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to London in mid-January for talks with Prime Minister Theresa May, it was announced that Japan had earlier that week lifted its ban on imports of British beef and lamb after nearly 23 years. The ban on beef was imposed in response to the European Union forbidding exports of British beef from March 1996, following the outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease, on British farms.

## Green light

After a lengthy and painstaking process to verify the safety of the meat, Japanese authorities are now satisfied that imports can resume.

And that, says Ian Gibbins, owner and cook at the Swan & Lion delicatessen and bakery in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward, is fantastic news for anyone who enjoys quality food.

"British beef tastes so good because the cattle are predominantly fed on grass—and fodder made from grass—and I think it's the same for lamb, so all that rain back home does have some benefits," Gibbins told *ACUMEN*.

"There have been some Japanese fans of the UK who have asked for British beef and were disappointed to hear that it is still banned for import," he said, adding that—price permitting—he intends to expand his menu as soon as supplies can be secured.

"We really want to do a Beef Wellington at BrewDog in Roppongi as part of our ongoing Sunday Roast Kitchen Takeover, and a roast leg of English lamb for a spring edition sounds perfect," he said.

"Many Japanese associate Britain with roast beef," he added. "So, if the price is right, I think it will grow in popularity. And I think the same applies to lamb. If they can price it competitively with New Zealand imports, I think it should sell well."

"This new deal to export beef and lamb to Japan ... will create some exciting opportunities".



Mark Spencer, president and chief executive officer of the Hobgoblin chain of pubs in Japan, agrees that feeding grass rather than grain to beef cattle results in far tastier meat.

"I'm looking forward to being able to serve British beef, especially roast beef on a Sunday and some tasty steaks", he said.

The fact that most customers are aware that British beef has been banned means they no longer ask for it. As a consequence, it may take a little while for consumers to realise that it is available again. The British Embassy Tokyo is planning to run a campaign to raise awareness of the resumption of exports among Japanese consumers, including via the Rugby World Cup this year.

## Show time

British beef and lamb farmers are similarly delighted at the Japanese government's decision to lift the ban. They are already making plans to attend the annual Foodex Japan trade show, the largest event of its kind in Asia, which will take place over four days in March at the Makuhari Messe exhibition centre in Chiba.

Dr Phil Hadley, market development manager at the UK Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), said, "The announcement is fantastic news for our farmers and producers, and it follows years of hard work by government, the AHDB and key industry stakeholders.

"Access to this lucrative new market is a testament to the high-quality produce and world-

renowned standards that we have here in the UK”, he added. “We are confident this new deal to export beef and lamb to Japan—alongside our existing pork trade—will create some exciting opportunities for our beef and sheep producers”.

The British Embassy Tokyo has been instrumental in moving along the process of having the ban lifted. In the 1980s, Sue Kinoshita, now Minister-Counsellor for Economic Diplomacy, negotiated an agreement with the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for the export of British bovine semen, which was in great demand among Japanese livestock farmers. That trade also came to an abrupt end when BSE broke out in the UK.

“The embassy has worked closely in conjunction with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) since the UK application to resume beef exports to Japan in 2012, delivering the processes required by the relevant Japanese authorities”, she told *ACUMEN*.

Those efforts have included conducting questionnaires and providing supporting evidence to demonstrate the “robustness of the UK’s animal health and welfare standards, and BSE controls and surveillance regime”. Hosting on-site inspections in the UK to demonstrate to Japanese authorities those standards in action has also been key, as have negotiations



British cows at an agricultural show in Tendring, Essex.

## The British government expects the market for British beef to be worth £75mn over the first five years.

on a range of bilateral agreements governing animal health and welfare as well as regulations governing exports.

“The embassy has spent years building close working relationships with the relevant ministries in Japan, which helped deliver this outcome”, Kinoshita said.

### Swift start

According to Kinoshita, exports could begin very swiftly.

“Following the conclusion of administrative processes for the listing of UK establishments that wish to export beef to Japan, farmers and food producers will be able to start exporting immediately”. Listing involves an inspection by UK agencies in line with the new agreements with Japan. Once a site has been approved, it is recommended to DEFRA, which will then ask the Japanese authorities to include the site on the list of approved exporters.

In 2015, Japan imported more than 700,000 metric tons of beef and 30,000 metric tons of lamb, the majority from the United States and Australia. Domestic production of lamb was a negligible 200 metric tons, but Japanese farmers produced 480,000 metric tons of beef.

Instead of going head-to-head with the bulk producers, British exporters are expected to deliver niche beef and lamb products at the higher end of the price spectrum to restaurants and retail outlets here.

The British government expects the market for British beef to be worth £75mn over the first five years and for lamb to earn around £52mn in the same period.

And even Britain’s biggest potential rival in the sector in Japan—Australia—welcomes the challenge.

“Our popularity is built on the trust that has been earned with Japanese consumers over

numerous generations”, said Andrew Cox, international business manager for Japan for Meat & Livestock Australia Limited.

“We do not consider ourselves a competitor to local beef but a complement, as Australian beef tends to be leaner and at a more affordable price point for everyday consumption,” he said, adding that Australia exported more than 300,000 tonnes of beef to Japan last year.

Cox says he “does not expect a major impact on trade of Australian beef” as a result of British beef returning to the market, adding that his organisation “welcomes competition from nations that can service Japan’s strict requirements”.



Preparing pies at Swan & Lion • PHOTO: ALEXANDER TREVES



Beef Wellington—a British classic

# EAST IN WEST

Japan House London builds cultural bridge

BY MEGAN CASSON



**JAPAN HOUSE**  
LONDON

The United Kingdom and Japan have long had a connection, and in recent years that relationship has become increasingly important. Japan is now one of Britain's closest partners in Asia, and this is reflected in the establishment of a new cultural home in London.

Found in a stylish art deco building centrally located on Kensington High Street and backed by the Japanese government, Japan House London aims to showcase the country's talent and innovation. An exhibition gallery, Japanese restaurant, events space, library and retail floor featuring Japanese products invite guests to experience the very best art, gastronomy, design and technology of Japan.

Although relatively new—having opened on 22 June, 2018—Japan House London has already surpassed its visitor expectations for the first year, having welcomed more than 260,000 guests as of the end of December, including Japan's

Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso and Prince William, Duke of Cambridge. *ACUMEN* sat down with Director of Corporate Development Carolyn Burnett and Partnerships Manager MaryAnn Broughton to discuss this exciting start and promising future.

## Brimming with opportunity

"A key objective of Japan House London is to build lasting partnerships between Japan and the UK," Broughton explained. "The development of a Corporate Members scheme is instrumental in meeting this objective. Corporate partnerships offer a rich and varied range of tailored opportunities. Since opening, Japan House London has attracted 37 member organisations, including 34 from Japan's corporate sector. We have a nimble

and customised approach to membership which can include a combination of exclusive invitations and access to exhibitions, venue hire and brand alignment".

With the wide range of existing members, potential supporters will be offered opportunities to engage with new and existing members of Japan House London to expand their networks and reach new audiences. Members receive exclusive invitations and access to exhibitions and can hear talks from curators as well as take part in expert-led guided tours and creative workshops. There are also opportunities to host clients at Japan House through expert-led tours, member access to Akira restaurant's beautiful *tatami* room and the opportunity to hold events and meetings in the building's contemporary spaces.

Japan House London has built an impressive following. The first seven months have exceeded expectations with nearly 15,000 followers on





Facebook, more than 15,000 on Instagram and just over 4,000 on Twitter.

“The feedback we are receiving from both visitor surveys and members is demonstrating a tremendous interest and appetite for Japan at the moment, as well as for the exhibitions and networks that Japan House London offers,” Burnett said.

With an onsite tourist information area staffed by the Japan National Tourism Organization, the London institution is not only sharing culture and building business links but also encouraging potential tourism.

#### Global nation

As a project led by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan House has a global presence. Along



“A key objective of Japan House London is to build lasting partnerships between Japan and the UK”.

with London, two other locations—São Paulo in Brazil and Los Angeles in the United States—bring Japanese culture to the world.

As the UK–Japan relationship continues to be of high importance, Japan House London will help encourage interest in Japan as a global destination for culture, business and tourism. And as firms invest in Japan House London, they will be investing in the ongoing alliance between the two countries. “We will continue to contribute to the UK–Japan relationship by using culture as a platform through which to share the very best Japan has to offer in terms of art, design and technology, as well as establishing long-lasting UK–Japan ties across all sectors,” added Burnett.

#### Road ahead

Now that a strong foundation of predominantly Japanese members has been established, Japan House London is looking more locally. As Broughton explained: “We are working to bring more UK organisations with an interest or presence in Japan into the fold to foster Japan House London as a platform for further collaboration. There are some excellent exhibitions and workshops in the pipeline and some new opportunities for members that will be introduced in March”.

With celebrations such as the UK–Japan Season of Culture, which will run alongside the Rugby World Cup 2019 that is to be hosted by 12 cities across Japan from September to November, and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Japan House London has a

vital role to play in preparation for these events. “We will be creating a number of opportunities to engage our members and visitors throughout the year,” said Burnett. “The Season of Culture will showcase the best of UK and Japanese creativity by bringing together artists, technology experts, researchers and business leaders from both countries”.

#### Early honours

The British Business Awards (BBA) are hosted each year by the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan. At the 2018 BBA, held on 2 November at the Grand Hyatt, Tokyo, Japan House London took home the UK–Japan Partnership Award.

For an organisation that has been around for less than a year, winning a BBA is no mean feat. “We were absolutely delighted and honoured to accept this incredibly prestigious award from such an influential and recognised organisation as the BCCJ. It is our members’ investment in us and their support for us that has enabled Japan House London to receive this award,” Burnett said.

As we enter 2019, Japan House London shows no sign of slowing down. The 37 current member organisations look forward to future collaborations, exhibitions and events, and can expect more connections to form with incoming members. With a BBA under its belt, a substantial social media following and the brains of leading Japanese creative talent, there is no doubt that Japan’s new cultural home in London will continue to spread knowledge and understanding of the innovation and cultural depth that together produce Japan’s famous flare. 🇬🇧

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# BECOMING KAEDY

Mori Building PR specialist recalls how a little Japanese girl met Britain

BY KAEDE HASEGAWA

**W**hen I turned 11, my parents told me that our family would move to Britain for my dad's work. It was my first time travelling abroad, let alone the first time moving house. I had never been on an airplane and could not sing "The ABC Song" to the end. While I was young enough to be excited about my first flight abroad, I still remember missing my friends so much that I burst into tears at Narita International Airport on the day of departure.

When I arrived at Heathrow Airport with my mother and brother, there was a small man waving to us. He was one or two heads shorter than the people around him. That was my dad. He had left Japan a couple of weeks before us so that things would be ready for us to adjust seamlessly. I had always thought my dad was tall. Seeing him here was when I finally realised I was no longer in Japan.

Driving to my new home from the airport took about two hours. It was in a little village in Swindon called Hannington. All I could see were green fields. There were no people waiting, but cows and sheep greeted us.

### Starting class

My brother went to a boarding school in London, but my parents decided that I should attend a local school. Fortunately, there was another Japanese girl there, but she returned

to Japan only a few days after I enrolled. Then I was alone.

On the first day, I followed the instructions in the letter from the school and went to the bus stop 10 minutes before the appointed time. I waited 20 minutes more and finally a large car, presumably the "bus" mentioned in the letter, arrived. I was very worried that I would be late for class, but the other students did not look as concerned. I came to understand that if you say, "The bus was late," the teachers would not count you as tardy. How surprising!

On my first day of class, being someone who could not fully sing "The ABC Song", I could not understand what everyone was saying. The teacher started calling out names, and I could at least guess that we were taking the register. "Kaide ... Kidie ... Kaedy," she called. Everyone looked at me on hearing an unfamiliar name. I figured that was me and said, "Yes". From that day, I became Kaedy instead of Kaede.

Many Japanese names are difficult to pronounce for English speakers, so I decided to give up my real name and chose the closest-sounding



Waiting for the bus with my brother and classmates on the first day of school



An unforgettable family trip to Scotland

one. It was not just the pronunciation that was difficult; my bus ticket showed different surnames each year. Hasejava, Hasaguwa, Hasegeua ... I finally got my actual surname on there for my final year.

### New world

There were so many cultural differences that shocked me at school. For example, students were not allowed to shave their hair, but they could dye it, unless it was a novel colour, such as green. Even girls had rugby lessons and were asked to own a pair of rugby shoes. Students were allowed to leave class to go to the dentist or music lessons. Every day was fresh and full of surprises.

One day, I took home a difficult math question. It was something along the lines of calculating  $\sqrt{873.74}$ . I was wondering how I would ever do this, since I was not familiar with square roots. I asked my mother but she was also uncertain, so we went out to ask our neighbour, a grand lady.

She welcomed us very kindly and gave me a scientific calculator. She started typing in the numbers and said, "This is very easy. Just press this button and this one". My mother and I had not expected it to be so simple. We had never heard of using a calculator at elementary and junior high schools in Japan. It was, again, a big surprise.

Our family was blessed to have wonderful neighbours. Some gave us raspberries from their garden, some took us to famous tourist locations and some invited us to Pilates lessons held at the village community hall. Every neighbour was our family's British teacher and someone on whom we could rely.

### Forming bonds

Through my local school life, I was able to find a lifelong treasure: British friends. They always supported me with English behind the scenes, helped me answer questions when the teacher asked me, and we would always go out for lunch together. I was able to learn many English words, and about British culture in general, by being with them.

What was so special and kind about them is that they showed an active interest in where I came from. Our interactions started when they tried my Japanese stationary and blurted out, "That's so cool!"



Shopping with a neighbour at a local town mall...



...and our reunion at Stonehenge seven years later

I realised how much I liked Britain and also how courteous British people are.

We talked about any and all things, including Japanese cuisine and snacks, school life and current fashion trends. When I invited my friends to a sleepover, we played with Japanese TV games and a portable photo-shooting machine known as *purikura*. My friends enjoyed trying on *yukata* and eating the hand-rolled sushi and curry my mother made.

One day, when I went out shopping with my closest friend, she suggested buying matching necklaces, which was then popular among middle-schoolers. One of the necklaces read "Best" and the other had "Friends" on it. From that day on, we became best friends.

Not only did my English improve markedly after making the acquaintance, but I gradually began to fit into British society. I preferred to have a birthday cake with colourful, heavy icing and I would put bacon crisps in my sandwich. I would leave midway through class to have a private



In navy jumper and prefect badge on the final days at school



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guitar lesson, and it became a routine to stop by the fish and chip shop after school. Perhaps most surprisingly, I found myself placing my shoes in a suitcase when travelling, without first wrapping them in a plastic bag.

The same best friend once invited me on her family trip to Scotland. We travelled with her grandparents and parents and stayed in a caravan for a month. As a lasting memory of the trip, her parents bought us little matching toy mice at the Isle of Skye. I named mine Skye. When they gave this to me, they said, “It will be your travel buddy from now, please take it on lots of wonderful journeys.” And I have.

**Returns**

When my fifth year in Britain was coming to a close, I was told we were moving back to Japan. Although there were many nights—particularly early on—when I looked up at the sky and longed to return, I no longer wanted to move back. I cried once again at Heathrow Airport, just as I had done when I first left Tokyo. I still remember my best friend’s dad, who looks a little scary and strict at first glance, crying together with me when he heard I was leaving.

On returning home, I wanted to ensure that I made use of my English skills. So, I travelled around the world for three months and visited 20 countries as a volunteer interpreter for a non-governmental organisation. Of course, I took my travel buddy, Skye, with me.



I served as an interpreter on this cruise ship that went around the world

After visiting and getting to know other countries, I realised how much I liked Britain and also how courteous British people are. Even a little boy opens the door for others and points out steps. “After you,” is always at the forefront of the British mindset, and the English used is so polite and beautiful.

Seven years after leaving, I travelled there again. My friends allowed me to stay at their homes for two months and drove me to places that I wanted to revisit, in the same car in which their parents used to drive them. My best friend’s dad, who had cried with me when I left, invited me to his garden and we planted an ornamental

poppy together, Remembrance Sunday being just around the corner. He said: “Remember, this is your British home. You are always welcome to come back.”

From my experiences in Britain, I learned that to learn another language, you need to understand the culture and customs of the country. You must get to know the country itself. I tried to learn about Britain, tried to fit in and get acclimated to the environment. I am very grateful to my friends who, with a generous heart, accepted me for who I am.

Next summer, I will again be in Britain, attending my best friend’s wedding as a bridesmaid. 🇬🇧



Reunion with my best friend’s family after seven years

From my experiences in Britain, I learned that to learn another language, you need to understand the culture and customs of the country.



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# GLOBAL AND LOCAL CREATIVE

How Williams Lea Tag is making it happen in the market

BY JORDAN ALLEN

**W**illiams Lea Tag was founded in 1820 and has grown to be a leading independent provider of marketing and communications services with 10,000 staff in more than 180 countries.

Today, about 80% of its employees work outside the UK. Japan is a key market for this British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) member as it works to strengthen its Asia-Pacific operations. *BCCJ ACUMEN* spoke to the firm's Global CEO David Kassler, who recently visited Tokyo.

**For those of our readers who don't know Williams Lea Tag, could you briefly sum up its activities?**

We are a leading global provider of marketing and communications services, enabling brands worldwide to optimise their communications and activate their marketing strategies.

**What does that involve, day-to-day?**

In simple terms, for the marketing side, we are a creative production, sourcing and print management specialist that can help brands activate their marketing strategies across all channels and regions. We do digital marketing, social media, out-of-home advertising and TV. We take a big idea from a creative agency and we make it happen in the marketplace. Sometimes that is local, so just here in Japan; sometimes it's regional, across Asia; sometimes it's global, all around the world. We make sure whenever [an idea] goes into a new country that it's translated and it is culturally appropriate for that country. On the communications side, we are a business process outsourcing partner offering anything from back-office-support services to mail-room management.

**Where in Asia have you got offices?**

Our main office in Japan is in Tokyo, and we also have teams sitting in Kobe and Okinawa. Across Asia-Pacific we have offices in Hong Kong,

"I hope that over the coming years that work-life balance and career flexibility change for the better".



Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai, Sydney, Melbourne, Seoul and Chennai, India.

**How big is your Japan operation?**

We employ approximately 350 people in Japan with a mixture of local and global clients.

**What trends are you seeing in Japan and elsewhere in the world?**

If you take the Japanese market in the next 20 years, there is obviously a big demographic change happening. We think it's going to become more and more important that you have flexibility in the workforce. We think Williams Lea Tag is going to be greatly appreciated by clients here in Japan.

We are an outsourcing business. We provide flexibility to companies with their marketing teams and communications teams, and so we are finding the companies really appreciate the flexibility of having an external provider of resources. Especially here in Japan, because the unemployment rate is so low—I think it's 2.5%—companies really need that flexibility from an outside provider of teams and people.

**How important a market is Japan?**

Japan is a very important market for us; it equates to 25% of our Asia business. We see Japan as a big growth driver in the future and there is enormous opportunity to improve awareness and understanding of what we as a business do and how we

can add value as a strategic partner to both local and international clients.

**In this tough labour market, what can employers do to acquire, retain and motivate human resources?**

Work-life balance is an incredibly important theme globally, but it is well documented that Japan has some of the longest working hours with little flexibility. I hope that over the coming years that work-life balance and career flexibility changes for the better for the Japanese workforce. Secondly, it would be good to see more employers embrace a diverse workforce and welcome those who traditionally stayed at home back to work. Whether that be new mothers or senior citizens, they all still have a lot to offer an employer.

**I gather the male-female mix of your Japan employees is good?**

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**How do you see work style reform and how it can affect the labour market?**

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# ARTS

## UK EVENTS IN JAPAN

COMPILED BY:

MEGAN CASSON  
megan@custom-media.com

MISA YASHIRO  
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PHOTO: © 2019 DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC.

Various locations

#### 5 9 FEBRUARY–14 APRIL

##### *Winnie-the-Pooh: Exploring a Classic*

The world-famous, much-loved bear Winnie-the-Pooh is the heart of one Britain's most iconic stories. Tokyoites can step in to the world of *Winnie-the-Pooh: Exploring a Classic*, an exhibition from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London—home to the largest collection of Winnie-the-Pooh pencil drawings by original illustrator E.H. Shepard—which is visiting The Bunkamura Museum of Art.

"POOH SITTING ON HIS BRANCH... BESIDE HIM, TEN POTS OF HONEY"  
WINNIE-THE-POOH CHAPTER 9, LINE BLOCK PRINT, HAND COLOURED  
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# ASIAN ACCOLADES

Best creative communications honoured

BY MEGAN CASSON



Each year, the Agency of the Year (AOY) Awards recognise outstanding business performance in the advertising and communications industries. Given out by marketing and communications journal *Campaign Asia*, the awards are split into five regional competitions:

- Australia and New Zealand
- Greater China
- Japan and South Korea
- South Asia
- Southeast Asia

With honours also given to networks, the AOY Awards is the only programme that honours agency excellence at both the local and regional levels.

In 2018, the AOY Awards celebrated their 25th anniversary and expanded to the UK as well as the rest of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). The UK agency of the year will be revealed in March and the EMEA winner will be named in April.

## Tops in Asia

The AOY Awards are a chance to congratulate agencies that have shown leadership, innovation, creativity and contribution to the industry throughout the year.

The 2018 Japan/Korea Agency of the Year Awards ceremony took place at Andaz Tokyo Toranomon Hills on 6 December, and the network honours were presented at the Ritz-Carlton Millenia in Singapore on 13 December.

Regional and local management teams from major agencies attended to celebrate the successes their teams and those of fellow firms in the media, marketing and advertising fields.

At Andaz Tokyo, eight individual and team awards plus 12 agency awards were given out. The panel of 11 judges reviewed and scored entries independently in the first round. Scores were then sent to auditing provider PwC to confirm the shortlist, before it was discussed

at another meeting of the judges to determine the winners.

TBWA\Hakuhodo, based in Tokyo's Minato Ward, was named Japan's Creative Agency of the Year for the eighth year in a row, and the firm's Digital Collective took home Japan Digital Agency of the Year honours. The bronze Japan/Korea Best Culture of the Year as well as seven awards from the people and team categories also went to TBWA\Hakuhodo. Six out of the seven were gold.

Ebisu-based MediaCom won Japan Media Agency of the Year after having finished third in 2017. In addition, their Asia-Pacific Chief Executive Officer Mark Heap was named Asia-Pacific Media Agency Head of the Year. MediaCom teams in Vietnam, India and Japan received gold accolades, those in Indonesia and Hong Kong won silver, and bronze went to their New Zealand and South Korea operations. 🇺🇸

The AOY Awards is the only programme that honours agency excellence at both the local and regional levels.

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# INVEST IN KOBE!

Why UK firms are drawn to the port city

Long seen as a gateway to western Japan, the port city of Kobe is transforming itself as Japanese society evolves. With the country's ageing and rapidly declining population attracting ever-increasing attention, the focus is all too often on the resultant negative effects and challenges presented. But the demographic changes can also provide an impetus for positive change, and this is especially true for the people who live in Kobe, as well as the businesses that call the city home.

At the heart of Kobe's transformation is a vibrant business community that makes the city an ideal hub for global firms. *ACUMEN* spoke with two such enterprises, based in the UK, to find out the reason they chose Kobe.

## Synergy

Gripple Ltd. is a market-leading maker of wire joiners, tensioners and wire rope suspension solutions for the construction industry. Established in 1989 and headquartered in Sheffield, Gripple commenced its Japan operations in July 2018.

"Our speciality is to support stadium, factory, office building and railway construction," explained Takahiro Makino, managing director of Gripple Japan. "And as Japan is going to host the Rugby World Cup this year, the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, and the World Expo in 2025, we thought we would be able to contribute".

London-based Advanced Design Technology Ltd (ADT) has also set up shop in Kobe. The firm develops advanced turbomachinery design



**Takahiro Makino**  
Managing director of  
Gripple Japan



**Mehrdad Zangeneh**  
Founder and  
managing director  
of ADT

methods and the TURBOdesign Suite, an aerodynamic and hydrodynamic 3D software package used to design all types of turbomachinery blades, including pumps, compressors, fans, turbines and torque converters.

"Japan is one of the most prominent countries in terms of turbomachinery research, development and production, and has been one of ADT's key growth regions for the past decade," said Mehrdad Zangeneh, founder and managing director of ADT.

Zangeneh, who is also a professor of thermo-fluids at University College London, added that ADT's new office in Kobe "strengthens our ability to help our clients design high-performance turbomachinery systems and, especially, to better support customers who use the TURBOdesign Suite together with Ansys Workbench, Siemens Star-CCM+ or the like".

## Why Kobe?

Many overseas firms head straight to Tokyo when setting up their Japan operations, but both ADT and Gripple felt that Kobe was a better fit. What was it about the country's seventh-largest city that trumped what the capital had to offer?

"The reason we set up our Japan headquarters in Kobe is that, from the beginning, the people in Kobe so eagerly welcomed and worked with us," said Makino. "And Gripple typically places its head offices not in the capital city but areas that are more practical for our business. Rather than in London, our company is based in Sheffield. In France, we are located not in Paris but in Obernai. And in the United States, our home is Aurora, Illinois, not Washington, DC, or New York City".

For ADT, proximity to those with whom the firm collaborates was key. "Many prospective customers, heavy industries and turbomachinery manufacturers are located in Kobe," Zangeneh said. "Access is great as well, with rail, subway and air transport options. There are already many global companies located in Kobe, and the living environment for employees from overseas is very comfortable".

These firms are just two examples. But as many enterprises are finding out, regardless of industry, Kobe provides a comfortable living environment and comprehensive support for global corporations. And for those preparing to invest in Japan, the Invest in Kobe website is an information hub. The site can help you plan your entry into the market or strengthen your existing operations. 🇬🇧

## FIVE ADVANTAGES OF INVESTING IN KOBE



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### 2. Easy access

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### 3. Comfortable living

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### 4. Support system

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### 5. Global home

Many overseas firms already call Kobe home, creating a community that offers extensive business opportunities and global presence.

Invest in Kobe: <https://global.kobe-investment.jp/english/project>

# FIRST PORT OF CALL

Kobe Mayor Kizo Hisamoto shares his love of UK and view of the future

BY LILY FUKUOKA



MAYOR PHOTO: LILY FUKUOKA

In 2018, the City of Kobe marked the 150th anniversary of its port, which has become a key hub of global trade and the gateway to western Japan. With the Rugby World Cup (RWC) bringing matches to the area in September, even more eyes will be on Japan's seventh-largest city. To learn how leaders view this opportunity, *ACUMEN* sat down with Kobe Mayor Kizo Hisamoto to discuss his expectations for the RWC 2019 and how to attract and promote the Kobe brand to the world.

#### How can Kobe attract more foreign investment?

Our city originated with the port and, soon after its establishment, western Japan's first railway service commenced between Osaka and Kobe, leading to many private railways being set up in the area. Today, Kobe can be conveniently accessed by land, sea and air.

After World War II, the first Shinkansen—or bullet train—went into service and the highways were improved. Then, in 2006, Kobe Airport

opened and gave our city all the necessary connections for land, sea and air access. And with construction of a highway running alongside Osaka Bay set to be completed in about 10 years, it will be even easier for people and products to flow to and from Osaka and other parts of western Japan. As a result, Kobe's long-term prospects will be dramatically improved.

In April 2018, the city handed over operation of Kobe Airport to the privately run firm Kansai Airports. This is a subsidiary of Kansai Airports, which operates Osaka's two airports: Osaka International Airport and Kansai International Airport. The resulting transport-related convenience, together with support by local governments for foreign industries wishing to set up in the area, should go far in boosting our potential.

Further, with eight international schools in Kobe, we are proud to be providing schooling that meets the needs of foreign executives' families.

#### For what industry is Kobe known?

Kobe continues to meet the challenges of new and diverse industries. Since before World War II, the city has been known for its manufacturing. But, following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, we began developing our healthcare industry. Today, we have the largest biomedical

cluster in the country. High-level institutes such as Riken, which is dedicated to physical and chemical research, have research laboratories in Kobe, and our hospitals provide high-tech medical services and high-level medical treatments.

In 2018, Dr Tasuku Honjo, a leading immunologist in Japan's pharmaceutical industry, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. As a result, Kobe is expected to be the focus of greater international attention, which should attract more investment from abroad.

#### What does Kobe offer startups and entrepreneurs?

Kobe is ideal for global startups and entrepreneurs because we offer them useful projects. For example, 500 Startups—based in San Francisco and the world's greatest accelerator of startups—chose to run its first Japanese programme in Kobe. In 2018, we held the third programme, which has had about 240 applications from around the world. More than half the applications have come from overseas—especially from Asian countries. The firm offers one of the best chances for entrepreneurs to expand their business globally and, as a result of all the activity, Kobe has become a city where young people feel free to challenge themselves and build their businesses.

Ever since we opened the sea port, Kobe and the UK have maintained good relations.

### How do foreign firms evaluate Kobe?

In terms of the business environment, we are located in the economic centre of western Japan and close to Osaka, the nation's second-largest city. Kobe is ideal for the healthcare industry, with high-level super-computing researchers and top researchers from around the world. Further, since we are close to the sea, summer and winter are generally milder than elsewhere in Japan.

### Will British Airways' service help Kobe?

The fact that British Airways' service between London and Osaka will resume in April looks very promising for Kobe. We operate the Kobe-Kansai Airport Bay Shuttle, a high-speed ferry between Kobe Airport and Kansai International Airport. The trip takes just 30 minutes, so people feel comfortable coming to Kobe from Kansai International Airport. Ever since we opened the sea port, Kobe and the UK have maintained good relations, so I believe some people in the UK are relatively familiar with our city from the good old days.

### Does Kobe have a history of rugby?

We have a local team called the Kobelco Steelers, which is known as one of the most powerful squads in the Japan Top League. The team is owned by Kobe Steel, Ltd., one of the largest and oldest manufacturing firms in Japan. Because we are home to the Steelers, our citizens have long been familiar with rugby and are very much looking forward to the RWC 2019.

### What does Kobe offer visitors?

We will host RWC 2019 matches with powerful teams such as England, Scotland, Ireland and South Africa. They will take on squads from the

## There is a British district in the area where you can find a traditional British pub called King of Kings.

United States, Russia and elsewhere. I believe this will attract people from the UK especially. During his 2018 visit to Kobe, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said that many people in the UK are interested in our city and would like to visit Kobe to support England's participation in the RWC 2019.

The matches themselves are, of course, very attractive, and we offer a variety of entertainment that can be enjoyed before and after games. Not only in Sannomiya, which is the main part of our city, but also in beautiful areas such as Harborland and Meriken Park, where you can have good food while enjoying one of the best views of the sea in Japan.

Kobe has many different faces. There is the old settlement part of the city that exudes an exotic atmosphere, as well as an area where you can feel the lively atmosphere of traditional markets. I hope people visit both.

Also, not too far from the city centre, is Mount Rokko. There you can enjoy the beautiful night view and nice restaurants. We plan to provide city guides for visitors as well.

Additionally, we provide English-language services in most public places, and offer English training for our employees at city hall and other public facilities. We strive to offer good service in languages other than Japanese, and specialists at the Kobe City University of Foreign Studies can assist in a number of languages besides English.



PHOTO: LILY FUKUOKA

### What is the history of Kobe beef?

During the Edo period (1603-1868), we did not eat beef. But after the port was opened in the Meiji period (1868-1912), Kobe became known as the first Japanese city in which people learned to enjoy eating beef.

The first governor of Hyogo Prefecture, Hirobumi Ito, was one such person. He was known to be internationally minded, spoke English very well, and was the first prime minister of Japan, from 1885 to 1888. Today, Ito is known as the first person ever to eat beef in Japan, and it is said that he first tried beef in Kobe. Ito enjoyed the international lifestyle that already existed in Kobe in those days. Like the port, Hyogo marked its 150th anniversary in 2018.

### Does Kitano Ijinkan have ties to the UK?

Yes, it does. In the Kobe Kitano Ijinkan area, we have preserved and continue to maintain Western-style former foreign-resident mansions from the Meiji period. There is a British district in the area where you can find a traditional British pub called King of Kings. Please enjoy some pints and British food after the matches.

### Any final message for rugby fans and investors?

It is a great honour for Kobe to have been chosen as a host city for the RWC 2019. Please take advantage of this chance to enjoy our city and promote friendship between our peoples. 🇬🇧



# GORGEOUS GATEWAY

Experience the wonders of Kobe

One of the first areas in Japan that opened to the West, the port city of Kobe has long had an international flair. It is also a place of great natural beauty and one of the largest producers of sake. Visitors to the country's seventh-largest city will be thrilled to find a place where fine cuisine, history and nature unite, and where surprises can be found on scenic streets, atop mountains and in museums.



## NUNOBIKI FALLS

This series of four waterfalls—Mentak, Tsutsumigadaki, Meotodaki and Ontaki—is just a 15-minute hike from Shin-Kobe Station. One rarely finds such picturesque falls so near an urban area and, despite being easily reached from Kobe proper, this getaway isn't overrun by tourists. If you're not up for the hike, you can take a ropeway from Shin-Kobe Station that passes by the falls on the way to an observation deck located on Mount Nunobiki. En route, you can visit the Nunobiki Herb Garden, which is home to 200 kinds of flowers and herbs.



## AIR CONNECTION

It will soon be easier to go from London to Kobe. Starting on 1 April, British Airways will offer four weekly flights between Heathrow Airport and Kansai International Airport, which is just 30 minutes away from Kobe using the Kobe-Kansai Airport Bay Shuttle. The move reflects growing demand as the number of UK visitors to Japan more than doubled—from 150,000 to 310,000—between 2011 and 2017.



## KOBE BEEF

Richly marbled and sourced only from pedigreed Tajima cattle raised in Hyogo Prefecture, Kobe beef is recognised worldwide for its quality. It can be enjoyed as *shabu shabu* (thin slices of meat quickly cooked in broth) or *sukiyaki* (meat, vegetables and seasoning cooked at the table), but the best way to savour the rich flavours is at a *teppanyaki* restaurant, where the beef is grilled to perfection on an iron griddle. It should come as no surprise that the first location in Japan to serve *teppanyaki* is a Kobe establishment, Misono, which opened its doors in 1945.



## KOBE MISAKI STADIUM RUGBY MATCHES

26 SEP   19:45	30 SEP   19:15	3 OCT   19:15	8 OCT   19:15
England v USA	Scotland v Samoa	Ireland v Russia	South Africa v Canada

Kobe Misaki Stadium is about a five-minute walk from Misaki Koen Station. The stadium has a retractable roof so matches can be held in any weather conditions, and the seats are very close to the field, so visitors will have a great view of exciting rugby action!



### NADA-GOGO

The Kobe district of Nada is known as the birthplace of sake, and the Five Villages (Gogo) refer to the five zones where sake is brewed. The roughly three-kilometre-wide district is the source of one-quarter of all Japan's sake. With so many breweries in one location, it offers the perfect opportunity both to sample an extraordinary variety of Japan's national tippie and to learn the finer points of how the beverage is made.



### MOUNT ROKKO

This iconic, mountainous area offers stunning views of the city and Osaka Bay, particularly by night. It's also home to many tourist attractions, such as a botanical garden, the country's first golf course—built in 1903 by the English expatriate Arthur Hesketh Groom—and Rokko Garden Terrace, which features restaurants, shops and an observation deck. Mount Rokko is easily reached by cable car, and a bus service provides convenient access to the area's attractions. Fans of sport and art should make sure to see *Rokko Meets Art*, an event that highlights the work of contemporary Japanese and international artists, which will take place during the Rugby World Cup.



### ARIMA ONSEN

With a 1,400-year history, Arima Onsen is said to be the oldest hot-spring town in Japan. The village is home to a number of hot springs and inns, many of which open up their baths to non-staying visitors for a fee. Hungry *onsen* enthusiasts will be happy to find dozens of restaurants in Arima Onsen serving a wide variety of dishes, from Japanese to Western, while travellers looking for keepsakes can drop in at the many shops selling souvenirs, snacks and local crafts. For the adventurous, there are trekking courses winding into the mountain paths outside the town.



### TAKENAKA CARPENTRY TOOLS MUSEUM

As the only museum in Japan dedicated to carpentry tools, its collection of some 30,500 items doesn't disappoint. It also offers a fascinating glimpse into the history of traditional Japanese architecture and the skill of the craftsmen who helped bring it to life. After a visit, you'll look at the country's temples and shrines with new eyes.



Kobe tourist information: <https://plus.feel-kobe.jp>

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Discovering the Joy of Kobe

# TWICKERS TIME

Brave Blossoms' hooker Yusuke Niwai recounts UK training

BY LILY FUKUOKA

**W**hen the Rugby World Cup (RWC) 2019 kicks off on 20 September, Kobe, the capital of central Japan's Hyogo Prefecture, will play host to four matches, three of which will feature England, Scotland and Ireland. In preparation for the tournament, Kobe native and Brave Blossoms' star hooker Yusuke Niwai took part in an official training camp in Twickenham, London. During his three weeks there, the 27-year-old played in a test match against England and soaked up UK rugby culture.

In addition to being part of Japan's national team, Niwai also plays for the Sunwolves in the Super Rugby league and is captain of the Canon Eagles in Japan's Top League. To learn more about his experience in the UK, *ACUMEN* spoke with Niwai.

## Why did you start playing rugby?

When I was 10, I started playing rugby together with my friend. Before that, I played football, but I had become bored with it and was looking for something more exciting. Then I found rugby. Being a full-contact sport I found it more exciting, which is the main reason I still enjoy playing rugby.

## Why did you decide to go pro?

When I was a high school student, although I was as big then as I am now, I was not big for a rugby player. I thought it would be impossible to play professionally. But, while I was at university and looking for a career path, I gained confidence in playing rugby and decided to join the Top League.

## What is your most memorable experience?

Honestly, all the memorable experiences are those when I felt frustrated rather than happy. The score is often close when our Top League team—the Canon Eagles—loses. I feel so frustrated. I hate losing! It might sound childish but, when I lose, I am in a bad mood for the rest of the day.

## What are your goals as a player?

I would like to become a player whom people trust. Both as a rugby player and a person, trust

is important. Even if you play well, if you are not trusted you will never do well in games. But it is difficult to earn trust, so I always make a conscious effort to be a person on whom people can count.

## How do you spend your free time?

When I have days off, I like to relax at home. When I hang out with teammates, we sometimes organise a barbecue. Recently, we had a Christmas party at a fellow player's house and exchanged gifts. This year I got body cream and lip cream as a Christmas gift.

## What was the turning point in your life?

There is a moment when I was in junior high school that I have never forgotten. It is something my rugby coach told me when we were in the same car on the way home. At that time, I was in

the school rugby squad's Team B—the reserves. But, at the last minute just before a match, Coach had moved me up to Team A. My goal had been nothing more than to move up to Team A.

Looking back, I know that was a mistake, but I did not realise it at the time. I was satisfied to be on Team A and forgot my real goal. I did not play well in matches, and the matches did not go well. We lost to a team we easily should have beaten.

After the matches, when Coach and I were talking alone in the car, he said: "Generally, I do not tell people but, this time, I will tell you the truth. I made a mistake moving you up to Team A". He probably no longer remembers saying that, but those words pierced my heart and have stayed with me ever since.

I said earlier that I want to become a player whom people trust. This memory is the reason.

I was surprised by how multicultural and international London is.



PHOTO: LILY FUKUOKA





When Coach told me this, I felt so frustrated. I realised that I had made him tell me because I had betrayed his trust. I was angry at myself.

This happened more than 10 years ago, but I still hear those words every day, no matter what I do. When I'm in a slump, I think back to this moment and I tell myself: "If I quit now, I will betray trust again. I do not want to do that". I do not want to repeat that mistake.

#### **What is your motto?**

"Where there is a will, there is a way". If there is no will, nothing can be achieved. The first thing I prepare is my mindset. I try not to lose sight of my true intentions.

#### **How was your recent visit to the UK?**

When we arrived at Heathrow Airport, people asked us if we were football players! When we told them we are Brave Blossoms, they remembered the RWC in 2015 and welcomed us.

London is very beautiful and the atmosphere is traditional. We did not have much free time but, when we could, we all went out and explored the city. I took lots of photos at Piccadilly Circus and Buckingham Palace. I felt like a country boy visiting Tokyo for the first time. I was surprised by how multicultural and international London is. It has lots of authentic traditional Japanese restaurants, and we found a *yakiniku* place and had some meals there.

On the final day, after the last test match, which was against Russia, we all had fish and chips

It was a great honour for me to play at Twickenham Stadium. It is the stadium rugby players around the world dream of.

together at the hotel. It was lovely! As rugby players, we shouldn't eat fried food too often, so it was something of a reward. We all enjoyed it so much.

#### **What will you remember most?**

It was a great honour for me to play at Twickenham Stadium. It is the stadium rugby players around the world dream of. I was absolutely delighted to play there and felt that one of my life dreams had come true. One day, after I have learnt more English, I would like to play for a UK club.

#### **Which UK player do you most respect?**

After the test match against England, we exchanged uniforms. I swapped mine with Maro Itoje, an English rugby union lock. I felt he was the most impactful player I had seen while in the UK. When I saw his back as we traded uniforms, I was surprised at his strong build! I am really looking forward to battling him in the future.

#### **Is it true that you have a sumo ancestor?**

Yes, my grandmother told me that one of her Edo period ancestors was a professional sumo wrestler in Osaka, and that his name was on the rankings list. As a descendant of a sumo wrestler from hundreds of years ago, I just might have some powerful genes.

#### **How do you maintain your strength?**

I pay attention to what I eat, consuming as much protein as possible, and vary my daily physical training. Weight training is very important for upper body strength, so I bench press up to 160kg. To make up for being relatively small for a rugby player, I make an effort to build strength.

#### **What do you recommend in Kobe?**

Kobe is famous for beef, and I would definitely recommend trying it when you visit. It is delicious and has a delicate taste.

Then Kobe boasts lots of great places to visit, including Kitano-Ijinkan and, my favourite, Mount Maya. At night, you get an amazing view from there; it is probably one of the most beautiful night views in Japan. When the weather is nice, one can see Osaka from Mount Maya. I love my city; it is very romantic at night.

#### **Any messages for our readers?**

At the last RWC in 2015, we surprised the world. So the first thing we have to do is win in the RWC 2019. We will outdo our 2015 performance. Please come and watch us in Japan. We will play against Scotland and Ireland and, I'm afraid, all I can tell your readers is that we will defeat them both. 🇬🇧

# LOCAL LINKS

British Olympic Association CEO  
builds medal groundwork

BY JULIAN RYALL



When Tokyo hosted the XVIII Olympiad in 1964, the occasion became known as The Happy Games and was accompanied by, arguably, the most ambitious urban development programme the world had ever seen. The event also demystified a nation that had been at war with much of the world just under two decades earlier.

Bill Sweeney, chief executive officer of the British Olympic Association, believes that 2020 offers similar opportunities for Japanese society—and the UK stands ready to share the lessons learned from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

## Parallels

“Back in 1964, a lot of people were still very suspicious of Japan; it was a mysterious place that not many people knew a great deal about and there was little understanding of Japanese culture,” Sweeney said in an interview with *ACUMEN* during his December visit to Tokyo. “The Happy Games went a long way to changing that”.

Reflecting on the UK’s own experience, he added, “We saw something similar in London in 2012, and many still recall how people would talk to each other on the tube and the feeling that was in the city.

“I think that, in 2020, the world is again going to see a side of Japan that they did not necessarily know about”, he said. “The Japanese will welcome visitors and these may very well be remembered as ‘The Friendly Games’”.

And while much will inevitably be made of Japanese technology—from robots that welcome visitors at Tokyo’s airports to state-of-the-art sporting arenas—Sweeney is also confident that the arrival of thousands of athletes from around the world, together with tens of thousands of foreign spectators, can serve to promote diversity and inclusion in Japanese society.

## Preparations

He spent three years in Tokyo from 1997 to 2000 as an executive with what is now the Adidas Reebok Group before joining the Team GB operation in November 2013.

“I went into sport because I didn’t want a ‘job’”, he confided, “and taking your country into the Olympics doesn’t feel like a job”.

Yet the challenges of ensuring that all components are in place to give the athletes the very best chance of winning a medal appear monumental.



“We started our preparations for Tokyo 2020 five years ago—so before the Rio Games—because we knew this was going to be a demanding Olympics”, he said.

The Japanese summer is a particular cause for concern, and athletes are taking part in a series of camps during the year to give them a sense of the conditions in which they will be competing next year.

### Relationships

Much work has also gone into building relationships with local governments that will host the Team GB athletes, and with the universities, schools and organisations that are sharing their sporting facilities. In addition, solutions have had to be found to logistical problems such as accommodation, moving between sites and ensuring that the athletes’ dietary and medical needs are met.

A good deal of that falls on Sweeney who, during his mid-December visit, signed a deal to use the sporting facilities of a high school in Odaiba, had dinner with the deputy mayor of Yokohama, took part in discussions at the British Embassy Tokyo and had a whirlwind series of other meetings in the space of two weeks.

He also travelled to the city of Motomiya, Fukushima Prefecture, to meet the mayor and

some of the 40 children affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and subsequent nuclear crisis, of 2011. The children had travelled to London in July.

“We hope this will be the start of a very interesting partnership, and we plan to set up a relationship between the school in Motomiya and schools in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England to develop long-lasting relationships”, Sweeney said.

Such relationships will be important when the Games start, he added, in encouraging the inevitably partisan home crowd to adopt Team GB as their next-favourite nation and to get behind the squad.

### Countdown

Sweeney is full of praise for the work that has already gone into preparing for the Games, echoing the International Olympic Committee’s assessment in December of progress as among the best they had ever seen two years ahead of a host city’s opening ceremony. Of the 33 venues, 17 are existing facilities that are being renovated and 11 are new spaces needed to promote sport in Japan. A mere five are temporary.

“From a cost point of view, this is a very sensible approach and, in this sense, the Tokyo Games are going to have a lot in common with London”, Sweeney said. “We used 2012 to carry out extensive regeneration of Stratford and other areas of East London, while the Japanese are regenerating the bay area”.



Tokyo will no doubt be hoping to emulate the £9.9 billion profit that the London Games raked in, with the legacy of 2012 still visible in the form of higher tourist numbers and new infrastructure improvements in the capital and beyond.

And as the countdown to the opening continues inexorably, Sweeney emphasised the gratitude that the British Olympic Association feels towards both the British Embassy Tokyo and the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

“The embassy has been extremely helpful, and we meet with them every time we come to Tokyo, and we have been working with Lori Henderson and the BCCJ team for five years now”, he said. “It’s absolutely critical to have experienced people and companies on the ground here who know the terrain and act as a bridge into Japan. That local knowledge is invaluable”.

We plan to set up a relationship between the school in Motomiya and schools in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England.





## UK-JAPAN EVENTS

**1** British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) President David Bickle welcomes members and guests to the BCCJ Shinnenkai at Palazzo Ducale Azabu in Roppongi on 17 January.

**2** BCCJ members and guests ushered in a new business year.

**3** Students from the British School in Tokyo took part in debates at the Model United Nations Conference in Osaka on 11–12 January. Topics included combatting disinformation and control of nuclear weapons, with each student representing a different country.

**4** BCCJ Executive Director Lori Henderson MBE and Nobu Asai, chief executive officer of KEF, maker of speakers and audio gear, at the new member welcome meeting at the KEF offices in Marunouchi on 10 January.

**5** The Japan-British Society (JBS) held the Junior Group Christmas Wreath Workshop on 15 December in the JBS office. Participants made Christmas swags using dried and fresh materials under the guidance of Hamei Matsumoto, a JBS member and certified Sougetsu Ikebana teacher.

**BCCJ ACUMEN** readers are welcome to email recent UK-Japan event photos with captions and credits for the editor to consider: [publisher@custom-media.com](mailto:publisher@custom-media.com)



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**6**  
The British Council Japan hosted Building Japan-UK Research Collaboration on Climate Change, a workshop for RENKEI—the Japan-UK Research and Education Network for Knowledge Economy Initiatives—on 29–30 November.

**7**  
Representatives from the Kagoshima Visitor's Bureau, led by Director Keisuke Kogi, paid a new member welcome visit to the BCCJ office on 11 December.

**8**  
Japanese Ambassador to the UK Koji Tsuruoka dances at the Japan Matsuri 2018 on 30 September in Trafalgar Square, London.

**9**  
The British School in Tokyo Ski Club went on their first trip of the new year to Minakami, Gunma Prefecture, on 11–13 January.

**10**  
The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan, together with 11 other foreign chambers of commerce, gathered at the Embassy of Canada to Japan on 11 December for the annual joint chamber *bonenkai*.



# STILL ROLLING

Les McKeown is in love with Japan's fans

BY GUY PERRYMAN MBE



For my first article of the year, I enter Scottish-style, first-footing with a dark man, tartan flailing and a hint of single malt on the breath.

And I bring with me a great conversation with Les McKeown, from one of Scotland's most famous musical exports, the Bay City Rollers, recorded last time he was in Japan. For McKeown, visiting Japan is an almost annual pilgrimage with a legion of fans always ready and waiting to relive (and scream for) their free-spirited youth.

The Bay City Rollers, starring McKeown, are one of the first British music acts to tour Japan in 2019. A series of live dates are scheduled across the country in February and are selling out fast.

## Eighties' memories

I'm sure a number of *ACUMEN* readers, most likely female, had posters of the Bay City Rollers on their bedroom walls when they were young. In my case, it was my two sisters' rooms that had the tartan-clad teen stars on the walls and the music at squealing volume on the record player. In fact, McKeown generously gave my sisters a personal shout out on my radio show, something that would not surprise his fans who know his unending enthusiasm for their long-lasting loyalty.

"It's a full-on, 24-hour job, because the fans know where you are," McKeown said. "And, of course, you've got to be professional and be with the fans and take pictures all the time and stuff like that. It's nice".

I asked why he thinks the fans love him so much. "I think it's because it's the day they fell in love with us, if you know what I mean. They were very young. We were also very young—I was only 18 when I first came to Japan—so, I think it's like a first love kind of thing, a first love of something. And they fell in love with this strange bunch of guys from little Edinburgh who were just jumping around singing in fancy clothes, and

they fell in love with us. And, thank God. It's kept me going for the past 40 years".

## Sudden success

When McKeown joined the already established Bay City Rollers, immediately everything exploded with mass international success. I wondered what it was like for him.

"It was what I expected, to tell you the truth. And that might sound a wee bit weird, but when I was five years old I was watching *Top of the Pops*. Then, suddenly, in 1973, I joined the Bay City Rollers. In January 1974 I was on *Top of the Pops* and thought, "Okay, here we go, I'm famous now". And it happened. It was really great. The population in Britain really took to us, thought we were really cute and lovely".

## Lasting legacy

And what is the best thing that's happened over the years?

"I think the regeneration of things, like not being un-famous. I thought once you're not in the record charts, you wouldn't be famous anymore. But, actually, I went on tour, I worked hard—I do work hard, I do 150-plus gigs a year in the UK—and tried my best to deliver what the fans wanted.

## I do work hard, I do 150-plus gigs a year in the UK



"The Japanese fans and the fans all around the world want us to keep coming back because they want to relive those young days, and that's why I deliver those young days. I dress up a little bit like those days and play the music of the old days and that's what they want".

And do you still love the tartan? "I do!" he said with a hearty laugh.

## Lost songs

McKeown is hoping that loyal fans and new ones alike will fall in love with some songs he wrote back in 1975, rediscovered on old demo tapes. In 2016, he recorded and released 10 of them as *The Lost Songs*.

Listening back to his younger self, has he changed musically from those early days? "I've changed a lot, yes; but I enjoy thinking back to those days, those happy, young, innocent days. I enjoy that. But now, these days, I'm thinking about blues quite a lot and country songs quite a lot. That'll come, hopefully, if I live long enough! But I wanted to get those young songs that I wrote for the Bay City Rollers out now. And it's interesting because some of them are quite sad. When I listen to them, I'm surprised that I wrote them when I was such a young kid".

## Loving Japan

The conversation concluded with McKeown delighting in a unique fan experience he had in Japan in 2017. "We did a karaoke show. I've never done that before, and it was nice to get up close and personal with everybody doing things like 'My Way' and 'Yesterday'. When the Bay City Rollers were famous, nobody could come close to us. For me to come close now to the fans, which I really enjoy, is a super experience for them and I can enjoy things through them somehow. I can see their happiness and I can enjoy that through my own experience. Brilliant!" 🍀

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