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The Magazine of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan



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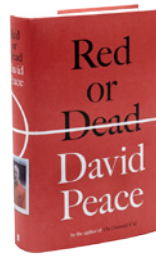


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To strengthen business ties between Britain and Japan, promote and support the business interests of all our Members, and actively encourage new business entrants into the Japanese market as well as Japanese investment into the UK.

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Jeff Streeeter | British Council Japan

BCCJ ACUMEN

Editor in Chief
Simon Farrell

British Chamber of Commerce in Japan
12F Ark Mori Bldg.
1-12-32 Akasaka,
Minato-ku,
Tokyo 107-6012
Tel: (03) 4360-8361
Fax: (03) 4360-8454
info@bccjapan.com
www.bccjapan.com

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BCCJ 2013 Company of the Year

Publisher
Simon Farrell

President
Robert Heldt

Creative Director
Cliff Cardona

Art Director
Paul Leonard

Editor
Brandi Goode

Client Services Manager
Sam Bird

Sales Manager
Leon van Houwelingen

Account Manager
Kieran Quigley

Account Executives
Jody Pang, Kasia Mecinski, Chris Chapman

Client Services
Megumi Okazaki, Gamma Siregar

Media Coordinator
Kana Shimoyoshi

To advertise or order BCCJ ACUMEN:
inquiries@custom-media.com

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Daiwa Azabudai Bldg. 6F
2-3-3 Azabudai, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0041
(03) 4540-7730
www.custom-media.com

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CONTRIBUTORS



VICTORICAZZOLIPHOTOGRAPHY

Alison Jambert, a founding director of Tokyo-based branding agency Eat Creative K.K., became BCCJ president in April 2013. Alison has over 20 years' experience in marketing for premium brands and manages key accounts as well as business development.



JEREMY SUTTON-HIBBERT

Lori Henderson MBE has been BCCJ executive director since February 2011.



Ian de Stains OBE, a former BBC producer and presenter, has been based in Japan since 1976. From 1987 to 2011, he was BCCJ executive director. Ian now focuses on writing, consulting and coaching and is the executive director of TELL. dest@attglobal.net



Brandi Goode is an editor at Custom Media K.K. with journalism experience spanning three countries.



JEREMY SUTTON-HIBBERT

Julian Ryall is Japan correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*.



Mark Schreiber is an author and translator who has been based in Tokyo since 1966. He was employed as a media analyst in market research before turning to freelance writing.



Tim Maughan is an Osaka-based freelance business and industry journalist.



Ginko Kobayashi is a London-based journalist and author. She writes a digital and technology column in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* online and for Yahoo!News.



Chieko River Furuta is a founding member of Daruma Energy Co., Ltd., the only energy firm in the BCCJ.



Dr Lee Andrew Kissane is a UK psychiatrist and member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He graduated from the University of Cambridge in 1999 and is currently finishing a PhD in Tokyo.



Nina Oiki is an economics graduate student at Waseda University and an intern for the BCCJ.

Contributions

BCCJ members and writers are welcome to submit ideas for content, which will be reviewed by the editor.
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Room for a View

For readers who like opinions on our pages, please welcome Ginko Kobayashi. It should be refreshing to hear from an eloquent and informed female Japanese resident of London, especially if you're more accustomed to perspectives on biculturalism expressed by the typecast Tokyo expat staring morosely into his beer at the local Dubliners pub.

Ginko and I passed each other like ships in the night in 2001 as she left the *Daily Yomiuri* and I joined the paper that was last year renamed *The Japan News*.

I had felt relieved to once again have a chair, desk and salary in this safe and clean metropolis after stringing as a journalist for several years in dark corners abroad.

Ginko, meanwhile, was no doubt excited and intrigued at the potential adventures that awaited her in the ultimate melting pot that is the UK capital, as she embarked on that most uncertain career of freelance journalism.

I can't wait to read how it went; if the first of Ginko's occasional columns (page 38) is any measure, opinions will not be in short supply.

Four days and Knights in White Lycra

Whatever happened to Tokyo Brits, the 10 middle-aged men in lycra who generously cycled a gruelling 320kms last year to raise funds for the quake-hit locals of Minamisoma?

Well, I can reveal they have more than doubled in size for this year's effort and rebranded as Knights in White Lycra, bolstered by Australians, Americans and Japanese in their ranks.

The destination is Minamisanriku, 465kms and four days from the 15 May start, with a target of ¥5mn in sponsorship. The beneficiary will be O.G.A. for Aid, a non-profit organisation that wants to fund a small vegetable-processing plant.

www.ogaforaid.org/en/kiwl.html

Partners in grime

Custom Media, the publisher of *BCCJ ACUMEN*, shares a close affinity with the Fujisawa Beach Cleaning Project, not least because we are both celebrating our fifth anniversaries, having endured simultaneous start-up pains together.

We've helped the NGO with editorial to attract volunteers and sponsors, with a coordinator, Alana Bonzi, filling our

early pages with reports of the biannual events that brought together foreigners and locals.

Here are some dates to save if you'd like to help this year's campaign in the Shonan area:

- Earth Day—20 April
- International Coastal Cleanup—21 Sept.

www.fujisawabeachclean.org
beach-cleaning@soleilprovence.com

Local festival, global taste

For a great time and cause, International School of the Sacred Heart will hold its annual Family Festival on 26 April in Hiroo, to celebrate the vibrancy of diverse Tokyo with food from over 15 countries plus dancing, games and shopping. Proceeds will fund local and foreign charities for poor children's healthcare and education, as well as the school's many programmes. 🇯🇵

Simon Farrell
 Custom Media
simon@custom-media.com



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Contact Sam Bird for details on arranging interviews, event coverage and sponsorship opportunities:
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VIETNAM'S STRONG POINTS:

- Lowest salaries in Asia-Pacific
- Only 10% of staff quit their jobs
- 60% of population aged under 30
- 50,000 university graduates annually



New, Cleaner London Cabs

Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. has unveiled a new cab design for London, the BBC reported on 6 January.

After an initial release in August 2012, the vehicle was modified to reflect feedback from the UK government. The new black cabs will be cleaner than the current diesel ones used in Britain's capital.

Developed by the automaker's European design centre in Paddington, west London, round headlamps and a redesigned grille are key new features. The vehicle will also have LED lighting to make the taxi sign more visible.

The updated taxis will go on sale in December. Nissan plans to launch an electric version in 2015.



©NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD.

Historic Whisky Brands Bought

Suntory Holdings Limited has acquired three Scotch whisky brands, *HeraldScotland.com* reported on 14 January.

The £9.8bn deal includes Scottish brands Teacher's, Laphroaig and Ardmore, as well as Jim Beam bourbon whiskey, listed in New York. Teacher's and Laphroaig joined the Beam portfolio in 2005.

The transaction will make Suntory the world's third-biggest premium spirits firm, with expected annual sales of nearly £2.6bn. The Japanese producer founded the country's first whisky distillery, Yamazaki, in 1923. Suntory has also been named a potential bidder for Glasgow-based Whyte and Mackay.

Tech Firm Invests in Nuclear Project

Toshiba Corporation has announced it will buy a 60% stake in a UK nuclear power venture, *The Daily Telegraph* reported on 14 January.

The electronics firm paid £102mn for a controlling interest in NuGeneration, which plans to build three nuclear energy plants in north-western England, including one in West Cumbria that will provide 7% of the UK's electricity needs. Toshiba will build three nuclear reactors for the project.

The deal is expected to create thousands of skilled jobs in Britain over the next decade and help Toshiba develop its overseas nuclear business, in the wake of weakened domestic demand since the March 2011 crisis in Fukushima.

Speciality Shop Opens in Tokyo

The world's first shop devoted to selling Kit Kat, a snack created by Rowntree's of York, has opened in northern Tokyo, *Japan Today* reported on 21 January.

The Kit Kat Chocolatory opened on 17 January at the Seibu department store in Ikebukuro. In Japan, those studying for

entrance exams consider the chocolate good luck, because the name, as pronounced by the Japanese, sounds like the phrase *kitto katsu* (you're sure to win).

The shop will sell Kit Kats in original flavours such as "sublime bitter", all created by acclaimed patissier Yasumasa Takagi.

Space Tours on Offer

A Tokyo-based travel agency has been set up to handle space tours for Virgin Galactic, *The Japan Times* reported on 7 January.

The agency, a unit of Club Tourism International Inc., is now the only official vendor in Japan for Virgin's space tourism arm. The first-ever commercial space tours are expected to take off in late 2014 and will cost about ¥25mn each.

About 600 people, including 18 Japanese, have so far booked passage on the galactic journey. Virgin expects that about 30,000 passengers, 900 of them Japanese, will take part in the tours during the first 10 years of operation.



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The world's first space tour is scheduled for later this year.

Sky Tree Photo Wins First Prize



Kevin Mullins' award-winning picture of the Tokyo skyline

A wedding photographer from the Cotswolds has been named Landscape Photographer of the Year, for his picture taken from Tokyo Sky Tree, the *Daily Mail* reported on 25 January.

Kevin Mullins hails from Malmesbury, Wiltshire. He entered the award-winning shot

in an annual contest held by The Societies, the largest professional body of photographers in the UK.

Mullins beat over 13,000 competitors to take the trophy and top prize of £1,000 worth of equipment.

Brollymaker Boosts Exports

Mitsukoshi, Ltd. is an increasingly important client for an English umbrella firm, the BBC reported on 27 January.

Exports overtook domestic sales at Fox Umbrella Ltd. for the first time last year, though global customers have always been crucial to the business. Founded during the reign of Queen Victoria and with prices going up to thousands of pounds, President

Ray Garrett said that Fox is "the Rolls-Royce of umbrellas".

Garrett said Japanese opt for lighter shades and eye-catching patterns, and that their demand for umbrellas in both wet and dry weather helps the firm avoid seasonal slumps. Despite the recent financial crisis, Fox has continued to expand. "It's always raining somewhere in the world", he said.

Intrepid Scouts to Travel Overseas

Two high school students are planning a 10-day, 160km hike through rural Japan in August, *Cambridge News* reported on 20 January.

Beth Elwood and Josh Robinson, both 16, will travel with a Birmingham scout group to Japan. They will walk in small groups through local villages, completing projects along the way.

The pair will be aiming to earn their Explorer Belt and asking people they meet during the hike if they can share their food and accommodation.



Beth Elwood (left) and Josh Robinson with their tutor

Event Expands Artist Profile

The London Art Fair, which mainly focuses on modern British art, showcased the work of two leading Japanese artists this year, the *Financial Times* reported in its 11–12 January edition.

The exhibition ran from 15–19 January and included 128 booths. Tokyo-based Whitestone gallery showed several works from the Gutai School, an avant-garde group that emerged in the 1950s.

Among the artists Whitestone took to London was Atsuko Tanaka, an original Gutai member. The gallery set the price for Tanaka's painting at over £300,000. The top price paid for a Gutai artist's work is around £2.4mn, the price for which a Kazuo Shiraga piece sold in New York last year. Whitestone's price for its Shiraga at the London fair exceeded £600,000.

Bard's Plays Translated

New Japanese-language versions of many of William Shakespeare's classics will be staged this year to mark the 450th anniversary of the playwright's birth, *The Japan News* reported on 21 January.

The Bungaku-za theatre company, founded in 1937, is also planning a Shakespeare Festival. The opening event, running until early March, features three weeks of performances.

The company's director Hitoshi Uyama said, "Humans have more than one face. [Shakespeare] sees events from multiple angles and depicts them from many different points of view. That's Shakespeare's greatest appeal".

Summer Railway Promotion

Thomas the Tank Engine, a character created by English Reverend Wilbert Awdry, will be coming to Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan Today reported on 7 January.

The train and his locomotive friends already have an amusement park and hotel dedicated to them in Japan (see page 37). Thanks to a collaboration with Sony Creative Products Inc., this summer, fans will be able to ride on a working Thomas the Tank Engine steam locomotive down the hills and round the bends of the historic Oigawa Line.

The Oigawa Railway is famous for its steam trains and spectacular scenery.

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Opportunities for learning abound

With global *jinzai* such a hot topic on the road to 2020, education and innovation are never far from our minds at the BCCJ.

On 23 January it was a real pleasure to attend the British School in Tokyo's 25th anniversary kick-off reception. Opened in 1989 by Margaret Thatcher, the school won the 2013 British Business Award (BBA) for Global Talent, and is currently going from strength to strength in terms of student numbers and exam results.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and we were delighted to hear that, from 2015, the UK-founded test will be used as part of the employment process for national public servants in Japan.

Earlier last month I visited the offices of Pearson Japan K.K., to say thanks to Chief Executive Officer Brendan Delahunty and his team for very generously having donated over 200,000 books to our corporate social responsibility project, Books For Smiles.

With our running total currently sitting at over ¥8.3mn, we are now in a position to fund higher education for four care-leavers in the Tokyo area.

Please stay tuned for more updates throughout the year.

On the evening of 30 January, I attended the annual ceremony of The Entrepreneur Awards Japan, held at the residence of US Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy. Accompanied by Steve Crane, 2013 BBA Entrepreneur of the Year, and Guy Perryman, 2013 BBA Person of the Year, I was inspired to see Tokyo's innovators out in force. The BCCJ played a part in this event for the third consecutive year, and we look forward to continuous engagement with Japan's groundbreakers for many years to come.

Diversity and Inclusion

On 23 January, I participated in an interesting breakfast session hosted by Tokyo Electric Power Company. The firm now employs two senior female executives—rather a feat in Japan—and is keen to promote more of its female staff. For those of you fortunate enough to miss my daily gripes about Diversity and Inclusion on Twitter, the country's statistics on female management and participation in the boardroom are more than a little dire.

In the presence of 16 heavy hitters—including Haruno Yoshida of BT Japan, Yuka Shimada of Unilever and Yasuko

Nagahama of BP Japan—I feel renewed hope that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Womenomics" will begin to bear fruit.

On a rather unusual note, towards the end of the month, I was invited by BCCJ member Scottish Development International to meet NHK in an advisory capacity regarding the broadcaster's forthcoming drama centred on a Scottish heroine, Rita, who is celebrated by some as the Scottish mother of Japan's whisky industry. The daytime drama will be the broadcaster's first to feature a non-Japanese protagonist and the team was keen to find out about the characteristics of Scottish women. "We heard they are very strong", offered Ken Sakurai, senior producer at NHK. I declined to comment, though I'm certain filming will be educational for both sides. 🇬🇧

Keep up to date with all BCCJ news, including regular business updates from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the European Business Council in Japan and our extended network of trade organizations at www.bccjapan.com.

Lori Henderson MBE
BCCJ Executive Director



I came to ARK with my four siblings, but we are all very unique. Me, I'm the family comedienne. Call me cheeky; I love to jump on shoulders and lick people's faces. It's pretty funny. Of course I love to play with my brothers and sisters, too. Adopting me with another cat would be awesome! I guarantee we will entertain you with our antics.

To adopt Happy Kitten or become involved with ARK, email:

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WHAT YOU MISSED IN THE JAPANESE PRESS

BY MARK
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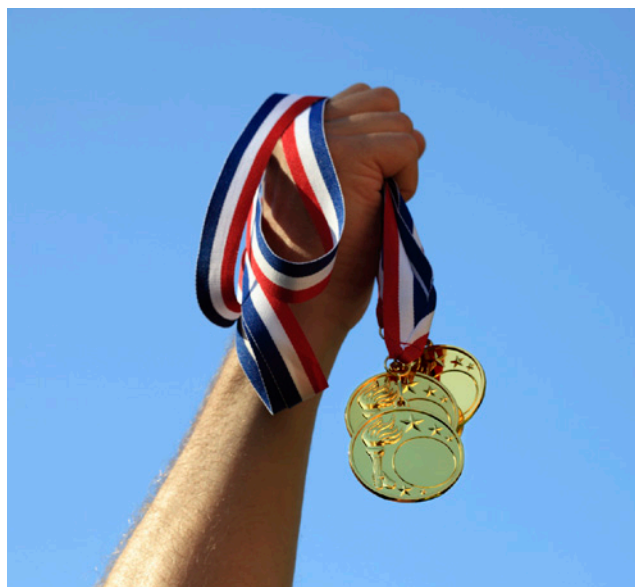
Forecasts for 2014

Given the growing trend of trying to project what will happen in the new year, *Nikkan Gendai* (13 January) asked researchers at think tanks and other individuals to collaborate on compiling a list of “Surprising Predictions” for Heisei 26, or 2014.

In the list that follows, the numbers in parentheses indicate the number of stars given to each prediction. The number (1) indicates the least likely probability and (3) the most likely.

- Decision not to proceed with the second consumption tax hike to 10% in 2015 (1)
- Japanese athletes taking three gold medals at the 2014 Sochi Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, with a total medal count for Japan above nine (1)
- China joining the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations (1)
- The Nikkei Stock Average plummeting to the ¥5,000 level (2)
- The yen’s value rising to ¥85/\$1 (2)
- Sony Corporation buying out Samsung Electronics (2)
- Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. merging with Mitsubishi Motors Corporation (2)
- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe again tendering his resignation (2)
- The Tokyo area being struck by a major earthquake in May or June (2)
- SoftBank Corp. eclipsing Toyota Motor Corporation to become Japan’s most highly valued company (3)

Hideo Kumano, an economist at Dai-Ichi Life Insurance Company, Ltd., said he believes that if China agrees to take part in the TPP talks, the Japanese market is likely to be flooded with cheap goods—more so than it already is.



Will Japan win three gold medals at the Sochi Olympics?

According to market analyst Itsuo Toyoshima, “Sino-Japanese relations face three problems: China’s proclamation of an air-defence identification zone in the East China Sea, the dispute over the Senkaku Islands, and Yasukuni Shrine.

“A military clash can’t be ruled out. And were that to occur, the value of the yen, which is regarded as a safe asset, would rise”. It was Toyoshima who made the prediction, in the aforementioned list, that the yen would rebound to ¥85/\$1.

Tax Rise Prompts Shopping Rush

From now until 1 April, when the consumption tax will rise from 5% to 8%, Japan is in a period called *kakekomi shosen* (hastening battle between businesses).

Last year, the *Japan Marketing Journal* (27 December) asked five mass retail chains that specialise in home appliances—Yamada Denki, Bic Camera, Edion, Case Holdings and Yodobashi Camera—which items they expect to be in high demand between now and the implementation of the tax hike.

Particularly conspicuous in their replies were large-capacity refrigerators, either those priced above ¥200,000 or those with a capacity over 500 litres. Other items expected to sell well included air conditioners, big-screen TVs, drum-type washing machines, luxury wristwatches and personal computers.

According to a nationwide survey of 1,000 adults conducted in mid-December

by Macromill, 57.7% of respondents said they planned some sort of financial outlay prior to the tax rise. Of these, 21.1% said they expected the expenditure to be relatively low, under ¥50,000. This was followed by 13.6% who planned outlays of between ¥50,000 and ¥100,000. Only 5.3% expected to spend above ¥1mn.

In terms of what consumers will be rushing to buy, home appliances and electronics, mentioned by 25.9% of respondents, top the list. Sales of personal computers and tablet computers are expected to spike ahead of the phase-out of Windows XP.

Electronics were followed in the list by daily household items such as detergent and toilet tissue (18.7%), and foods and beverages with an extended shelf life (17.6%). Indications suggest short-term demand is also rising for clothing and shoes, as well as furniture and interior goods.



Large refrigerators are in high demand.

Jobs Shortage Seen



Many family restaurants are expanding operations.

In mid-December, the Teikoku Data Bank conducted a survey of 10,375 firms on manpower shortages. A full 24% of respondents said they were unable to fill their ranks of non-regular positions.

By industry, 53% of food and beverage businesses reported a shortage of candidates for non-regular jobs. The shortage was attributed to new demand for workers created by expanded investments, particularly among family restaurants.

This was followed, in descending order of shortages reported, by: temporary staffing firms; Japanese inns and hotels; retailers of pharmaceuticals and sundry goods; foodstuffs retailers; maintenance, security and inspection firms; general retailers; transport and storage firms; electronic communications firms; and furniture retailers.

The survey also highlighted a shortage of regular (full-time) workers; about 37% of respondents said they were struggling to reach full staffing levels. A particularly high shortage was reported in the appliance and personal computer retailing sector, where Abenomics has been credited with boosting consumer demand.

The labour shortage may also be responsible for a slight increase in wages. According to a December poll conducted in the Chubu, Kanto and Kansai regions by Recruit Jobs Co. Ltd., as reported in the *Nikkei Marketing Journal* (22 January), the average hourly wage for part-time workers rose ¥3 to ¥959, compared with the same month in 2012. This wage is the highest recorded since Recruit Jobs began the survey in January 2006.

Late-night Bus Service Launched

On 21 December, an all-night bus service was launched covering the 2.73km segment between the nocturnal playground of Roppongi and JR Shibuya Station. The move is seen as an experiment to lay the groundwork for the gradual expansion of Tokyo's transport network to round-the-clock operations.

"It's convenient when I have to do overtime", a 41-year old company employee, who works in the Shibuya area and commutes from Yokohama, told the *Sankei Shimbun* (5 January). The man said he would also probably use the service when visiting Roppongi for social activities.

A 21-year-old female office worker said she welcomed the new service due to the difficulty in hailing a cab in Roppongi late at night. "I appreciate the presence of security staff aboard the bus, so I don't have to worry about unruly drunks", she said.

The metropolitan bus network foresees the wider adoption of 24-hour services ahead of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Profitability of the operations will be a key consideration. Passengers on the four round-trip departures running between Roppongi and Shibuya from 1:10am to 5:30am pay ¥400—twice the regular bus fare.

According to a source at the Institute of Transportation Economics, late-night operations in such European cities as London, Paris and Barcelona have faced chronic deficits and rely on tax revenues to subsidise their operations.

"Rather than depending on a limited passenger segment, it will be necessary for the infrastructure to handle a wide range of needs, or it won't fly", the source said. This led the reporter to conclude that the success or failure of the new endeavour will depend on how soon late-night bus transport can dovetail with the city's changing lifestyles. ❄



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The new bus service runs from 1:10am to 5:30am.



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You Only Vote Twice

New constitution to be tabled at March EGM

You may remember that last year's Executive Committee (Excom) elections were the most hotly contested in the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan's history. Voter turnout set new records for member engagement. It was also very instructive.

When the dust had settled, we recognised the need to create a more robust set of rules and procedures for contested elections, designed to strengthen democracy, openness, accountability and efficiency as the BCCJ continues to expand.

This led to the appointment of an Excom task force to review possible changes to our constitution. Excom has now approved the task force's recommendations, which will be presented before you, our members, at an Extraordinary General Meeting

(EGM) on Wednesday, 5 March. The key constitutional changes can be found on the BCCJ website (www.bccjapan.com).

Once approved, the revised constitution will govern this year's Excom elections, set to take place throughout the month of April, with results announced at the Annual General Meeting on 23 April.

Members can access a marked-up copy of the revised constitution on the chamber's website. For further information or clarification, please contact the chamber secretariat through Executive Director Lori Henderson: henderson@bccjapan.com.

So yes, we're asking members to vote twice this year, first to enhance the governance of the chamber, and second to elect the next Excom under a new set of rules. Both votes mark critical opportunities to make your voice heard. I urge you to take advantage, and I

look forward to setting new records of member engagement.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the taskforce composed of Ray Bremner OBE, Reiko Sakimura and Jim Weeks for all their hard work and important contributions to moving the chamber forward.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I hope to see you all at one of our upcoming events. 🇬🇧

Alison Jambert
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Scientists pioneer research into pain, disease and hearing

By **Tim Maughan**

- **Uses brain scan data to assess pain**

Dr Ben Seymour of CiNet Osaka

- **Cutting-edge disease research**

Dr Alison Hobro of IFReC, Osaka University

- **Studies inner ear's potential for repair**

Dr Steve Freeman of RIKEN, in Kobe

Britain's long tradition of scientific pioneering is as strong as ever—and is making its presence felt in the Kansai region. *BCCJ ACUMEN* met with three Britons who, leading the charge, are pursuing their research vocations in Osaka and Kobe.

A layman would be forgiven for not knowing the difference between a neurologist and a neuroscientist. University of Cambridge brain specialist Dr Ben Seymour is both. “A neuroscientist is a core scientist, a basic research scientist; a neurologist is a clinical doctor who sees patients with brain problems in a hospital”, Seymour explained.

Seymour works nearly 10,000km from his native UK, at the Center for Information and Neural Networks (CiNet) in northern Osaka.

“My career has combined clinical training in neurology, which I have done in Manchester, London and Cambridge. Clinical academia is hard, because there is a long career pathway. At the age of 40, I became an independent neurologist and an independent scientist. To achieve independence in both science and medicine now takes at least 20 years”, he said.

Today, after over two decades of continuous study and research, Seymour has been a visiting principal investigator at CiNet for the past two years. The institute is jointly run by Osaka University, the Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute International, and the Japanese government's National Institute for Information and Communications Technology (NICT). Among other achievements, the NICT is credited with developing 3-D television.

“NICT wanted to invest in neuroscience, to meet their broader aims of trying to develop the field



COURTESY ASTRAZENECA PLC

of communications technology”, Seymour said.

“Their thinking was, how will the next generation of communications technology exploit the brain? That is, either how brains communicate or, in fact, how the brain works, and how this can be used to build better communications networks, computing and so on”.

Interestingly, Seymour said, “There is no direct industry spin-off. There is a capacity for collaboration with industry and companies, but there is no requirement to do that. It is all applied neuroscience”.

Speaking of scientific processes in general, he explained that some research has “very immediate applications”, while applications for other studies may not be found until many years later.

“My personal belief is that we should stick to doing what is interesting, because that is when we come up with the most creative ideas. You don’t have to have an idea about how an application will develop. There are many unknowns in the world, and we explore them to find what’s there. And then applications come. They always come”, he said assuredly.

The trained neurologist works with three other scientists at the CiNet facility. Currently, he is looking at pain biomarkers (biological markers).

As measures of a certain biological state, biological markers are defined



as characteristics that are objectively measured and evaluated as indicators of normal biological and pathogenic processes, or as pharmacological responses to therapeutic intervention.

Seymour and his colleagues use data from brain scans to gauge levels of human pain. “One of the challenges is to develop a biomarker that will aid diagnosis and prognosis”, he said.

Because pain is subjective and cannot be seen, a scan of a human back cannot show the severity of discomfort a person may feel. But, activity in the brain is a representation of that person’s pain. “If we can understand that, we can understand what causes pain in the first place, in the brain. We can use that to develop new treatments, identify people with chronic pain and classify different types of such pain”, he said.

Dr Ben Seymour specialises in neurology, and is a clinical doctor and research scientist.

>

Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca plc has 3,000 staff in Japan. Unlike most large global firms with operations in this country, its headquarters are in Osaka, not Tokyo.

AstraZeneca came to Japan and established its base in the Kansai region in 1975. It now operates 20 sites across the country; most of the manufacturing is undertaken in Shiga Prefecture.

“We have two major business units”, said Takako Mitsui, director of corporate communications. “One is oncology, and the other is primary care. For example, we provide respiratory medicine and anti-cholesterol drugs. We are a global company, so the majority of our products [for the Japanese market] are imported from overseas and packaged in Japan”.

Exciting things are in the pipeline for the pharma firm, which the Japanese government has ranked ninth among pharmaceutical companies. One of its specialities is diabetes medication, and its oral drugs for the condition are expected to enter the Japanese market in the first half of this calendar year.

In addition, it will be moving the AstraZeneca headquarters to the Grand Front Osaka business complex in April.



AstraZeneca’s current Japan headquarters in the Umeda Sky Building



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New tools to know disease

Within a few minutes' walk of CiNet is the Immunology Frontier Research Center (IFReC), Osaka University, where Worcestershire-born Dr Alison Hobro works. Her job title: specially appointed researcher. Although the IFReC is run under the auspices of Osaka University, she said that the institution enjoys an element of autonomy.

Hobro is not employed by a British university, so her research is independent of the UK. Her work is funded by the Akira Project, a Japanese science programme that focuses on immunology and is financed by the Japanese government.

“At the moment I am researching Raman spectroscopy, and its applications to all sorts of different things”, Hobro said.

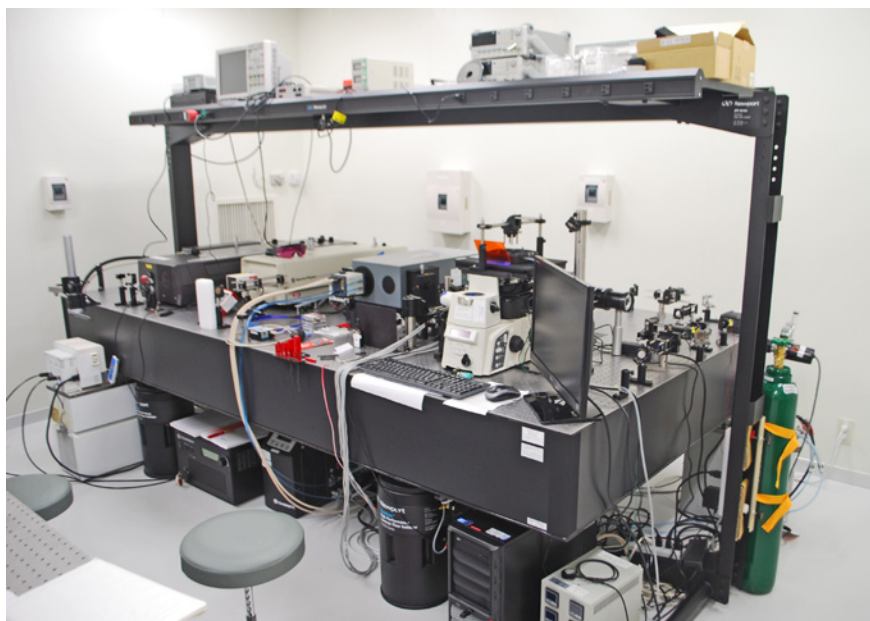
CV Raman (1888–1970) is one of two physicists who discovered the inelastic scattering of light in liquids, she explained.

“This is a measurement technique that can be used for any type of material. You have a laser, at a defined wavelength, and you send it to your molecule. Most of the light doesn't interact, or it just scatters off at the same frequency. What we are interested in is the light that interacts with the molecule: light that comes back is scattered back at a different frequency to the one we sent to the molecule”, she said.

The difference in frequency, according to Hobro, relates to the vibrations in a molecule. This technique is then applied to cells. Hobro scrutinises any differences in the signature between the cells. The signature is defined as the difference in the signal received, which is obtained in the Raman process. The results tell her which biological molecules inside the sample have changed.

“We are using this method to study cells and tissues that have been infected or activated. In one such project, we are looking for changes in blood cells during malaria infection, such as the presence of hemozoin [a waste product formed by the malaria parasite during the digestion of blood], as a marker for the disease”, she said.

Hobro was keen to share both the complex and modest objects that make up the overall project. First, a Raman



NICHOLAS L. SMITH

Dr Alison Hobro uses the huge Raman microscope (top photo) to study molecular changes in cells.





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microscope, an enormous tool that is formed by an entire tabletop collection of connected cables, boxes, lenses and objects unidentifiable by a scientific novice. The microscope can be used in three ways: either as a Raman device, as a holographic tool, or, as both simultaneously, she said.

She then pointed to some live cells in an area her colleagues call the Wet Lab. Compared to the Raman microscope, the apparatus used for viewing seemed very basic indeed. A vial of such cells can cost anywhere between ¥20,000 and ¥60,000. Maintained at a temperature of 37°C, the vials are supplied with salt, glucose and amino acids to encourage growth. After increasing in size, the cells reproduce, Hobro said.

Ears to the ground

The third visit was to the RIKEN research centre, on Port Island, Kobe. Noriko Hiroi, a personal assistant and interpreter at the facility, explained that, in many cases, a bilingual English/Japanese speaker is needed in such a scientific environment. She translates grant proposals and acts as an interpreter at schools when a foreign researcher conducts a presentation. Hiroi also deals with visiting salespeople, who come to the laboratory to exhibit new equipment.

She works in a lab that solely deals with the inner ear. The British scientist, in this case, is visiting researcher Steve Freeman, who started his higher education journey while studying for a biology degree at the University of Leeds.

“I work specifically on the inner ear, and I’m interested in the potential to repair. In science, mammals—including humans—have a very limited ability to repair any damage to the inner ear, but there are lots of animals that have a very strong ability to do this”, Freeman said.

Reptiles and chickens, he said, have a knack for repairing their ears, but the “million-dollar question” is exactly why humans cannot do the same thing. Our ears have three main parts: the outer, the middle, and the inner ear. Each ear has two functions: hearing, of course, but also balance, he explained.

“Hearing is about hairs. The hearing cells have tiny hairs. Sound hits these hairs and causes them to move, which



Dr Steve Freeman is interested in why humans lack the ability to repair damage to the inner ear.



creates an electronic signal that goes to your brain. When the hairs die, that reduces your hearing; eventually they all die, and you become deaf”.

Bird species, meanwhile, have the extraordinary ability to regrow their ear hairs in as little as two weeks, according to Freeman.

Research processes, he explained, are characterised by troubleshooting. Scientists often rely on inexpensive, small tools like sticky tape and Blu Tack to keep costly equipment ticking over, rather than have such items out of commission while awaiting repair.

“People think of labs as pristine, but it is not really like that; it’s a controlled mess”, he said.

Time is the most precious commodity. Typically, a post-doctoral researcher like Freeman spends three to five years on a particular project. His current position ends in August. Researchers have to write their own medical reports, which are important documents to track their work. A solid, professional tome is a prerequisite for progressing along the research path.

Inevitably, fresh research means entering uncharted areas. And for that reason, Freeman stresses, scientists need to be prepared to deal with the unknown.

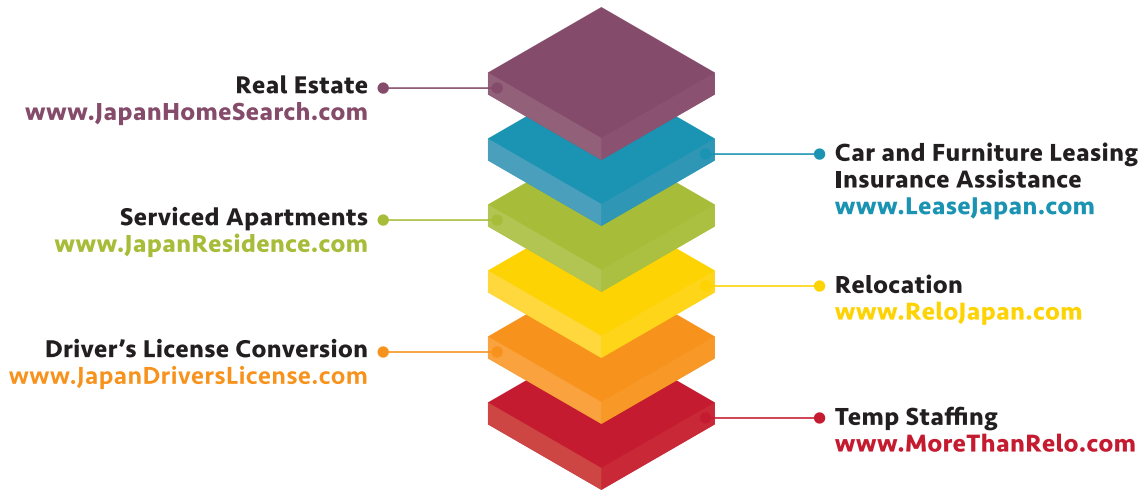
“You should never have too much in mind; it is good to be open to all possibilities”.



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New World Order?

Lord Patten on today's big issues

By Julian Ryall

- US will continue to play major role
- China not rising as fast as some believe
- EU exit would be unwise for Brits

Confronted by fears over the future of Britain and its relationship with the European Union, as well as the seemingly inexorable rise of China and the consequent contraction of the United States, Lord Patten of Barnes is more sanguine. Common sense will prevail in the UK, he believes. The decline of the US is much exaggerated, and China, for all its bombast, faces some serious issues in the immediate future.

At the invitation of Ambassador Tim Hitchens CMG LVO, Lord Patten spoke at the British Embassy Tokyo last year, as part of a series of lectures featuring prominent British political leaders, thinkers and artists.

Following his role in the 1980s as a minister in the cabinets of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Chris Patten served as chairman of the Conservative Party for two years from 1990. He then became Britain's last governor of Hong Kong—where he was affectionately known as Fat Pang—until the territory was handed back to China in 1997. Subsequently, he served as European commissioner for external relations. Patten is the vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford and, since 2011, has been chairman of the BBC Trust.

Lord Patten prefaced his speech by mentioning how, while some say we have never lived in more dangerous times, he grew up in the darkest days of the Cold War and the threat of “mutually assured destruction” posed by nuclear weapons.

“When I went up to Oxford in 1962, my first term coincided with the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the world teetered on the edge of nuclear Armageddon”,

Patten said. “So it is difficult for me to accept that we live in a world that is more dangerous than that”.

He agreed, however, that, “We do live in a more uncertain and less stable world than the one dominated by the international security strategies of the US and its partners, along with the Soviet Union”.

The demise of Communism in the Eastern Bloc, the emergence of non-state actors, intense regional conflicts, a waning of Washington's influence and the potential fragility of the global economic system, as demonstrated by the Lehman shock, mean that “we now live in a very different world”, he said.

“It is no longer economically and politically dominated by the trans-Atlantic partnership and Washington's relations with Japan”, he said. “Certainties have been shredded”.

Whereas the US accounted for 38% of global gross domestic product when Patten first visited the country in 1965, that proportion had declined to 30% in 2000, and 23.1% by 2010. In tandem with the decline, China has been rising on the back of a cheap workforce and overhead costs. But Lord Patten does not believe the economies of the rest of the developed world are played out and that China will be the undisputed victor in the 21st century.

That, he said, is the declinist argument. “The US remains an astonishingly

successful economy and, more than any other, is able to turn technology into highly profitable corporations”, he said. “We have also seen the re-emergence of the US manufacturing industry; that will pick up speed as the US becomes energy-independent from fracking”.

He added that a growing population, 42 of the best 50 universities in the world, and the ability to attract the “best and the brightest” will continue to mean that “the United States is the only country that matters everywhere”.

“It may not be able to get its own way on everything, like it did in the past, and maybe it cannot dominate the international agenda as it once did, but it is impossible to think of an economic, military or security issue that can be solved if the US is not involved”, he said.

Turning to the situation in Europe, Lord Patten pointed out that, while the continent accounts for around 7% of the world's population and 25% of global output, that is overshadowed by its 50% of global spending on social services.

On a more positive note, the most recent forecasts suggest that Britain is likely to have the largest economy in Europe by 2040, although Brits still have a love-hate relationship with the single currency and the EU in general.

“We joined the Common Market later than we should have done and we've been struggling ever since with some of the institutions that were created before we joined”, he said. There has also been a reluctance to fully engage with the single market, because it is seen as “a lamentable intrusion into our national sovereignty”, he added.

Nevertheless, should Britain's participation in the EU be put to a referendum, Lord Patten is optimistic of the outcome.

“My own view is that those who want us to leave the EU should listen to the evidence put forward by our friends in the US and Japan”, he said. “The conclusion is that it would be a pretty rum thing for us to do”. 



Outlook Good for Hiring

Salary surveys show growth in 2013 and 2014

By Brandi Goode

- Financial services sector rebounding
- Demand for talent exceeds supply
- Abenomics inspiring business confidence
- Language skills remain important

Things are looking up in Japan, as this year's salary surveys suggest rising confidence among businesses in all sectors. Since the Liberal Democratic Party's return to power, the domestic economy has started to rebound. The pro-business policies of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government have been an impetus for companies to increase headcount.

"Many companies loosened their corporate purse strings to fill business support roles", said David Swan, managing director, Japan & Korea at Robert Walters Japan KK. The firm's annual salary survey also pointed to Tokyo's win as host city for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a likely source of economic stimulus in years ahead.

The 2014 Hays Salary Survey shows that 43% of employers expect to increase their permanent headcount this year. However, in the opinion of Jonathan Sampson, regional director for Hays Specialist Recruitment Japan KK, "There is much more to do, and indeed much more importance in Abe's 'third arrow', plus the need for real change in Japan's approach to diversity, the employment

The 2014 Hays Salary Survey shows that 43% of employers expect to increase their permanent headcount this year.



regulatory environment, education system and immigration".

The 2014 Michael Page Salary and Employment Forecast for Japan also states that Abenomics is beginning to have a positive impact, although this has yet to translate into a significant increase in recruitment. That is expected to change in 2014.

Another salient factor concerning the current employment market is a serious supply-demand imbalance in terms of available talent.

"Demand for candidates far outstrips supply", said Basil Le Roux, managing director at Michael Page Japan. "Government statistics show that there is a 1:1 ratio between candidates and vacancies, which is also reflected in the fact that candidates normally have multiple offers".

The recently published Hays 2013 Global Skills Index shows that Japan has the highest score for disparity in supply versus demand for hiring. The Hays report notes a shift towards soft skills becoming more important. "Underpinning this is one of the highest talent mismatches anywhere in the world", Sampson said. He emphasised a spike in demand for staff with a

"global mindset" who can operate in a "global marketplace".

International language skills are a chief requirement. All three firms agreed multilingual candidates are in demand across all industries. As the Michael Page report points out, only an estimated 4%-5% of the population speak English.

This foreign language requirement encompasses Japanese professionals with foreign language skills as well as non-Japanese who are well versed in Japanese culture, according to the Robert Walters survey. As Swan puts it, "Languages other than English, particularly Chinese and Korean, are also desired in Japanese firms to help their foreign expansion plans". The report highlights a chronic skills shortage among Japan's junior workforce, due to various reasons such as the ageing population.

According to Swan, "There are a limited number of professionals with both the necessary technical background—such as IT [Information Technology] and law—and fluency in multiple languages".

In this talent-short market, finding the right candidate may prove a challenging task. Potential hires should not only be skilled in their particular discipline,

but also well rounded. Attracting and retaining high-calibre people is a top priority for firms.

The Michael Page survey reveals that structured career progression was the most widely used tool (23% of respondents) for luring the best candidates, and lack of promotion opportunities was the leading cause (also 23%) of staff resignation. Compensation is always a factor, but Le Roux suggests “a combination of financial incentives as well as opportunities for more rapid career development and growth than Japanese companies typically offer” can be effective for foreign multinationals.

Remuneration is just one, albeit critical, factor in securing talent. In Hays’ survey, 88% of respondents indicated they expect to raise salaries in 2014. Firms are also investing more in their corporate social responsibility programmes “to align more with both customers and prospective employees”, Sampson said, adding that flexibility in scheduling and engaging female staff has moved from simply “boardroom talk” to “frontline action”.

Appealing work-life balance has taken on increased importance in the hiring process, particularly in the demanding areas of Accounting and Finance, according to Robert Walters’ Swan. “Firms should make the hiring process as short as possible and be flexible by considering people with potential rather than those who can do the job straight away”, Swan said. The Robert Walters survey stresses that flexibility and speed will be two key features for successfully securing the best candidates this year, as those with in-demand skills become in shorter supply.

Last year, the three recruiting firms cited a trend to shift back-office functions overseas. While this trend seems to be continuing, it is doing so “at a declining

The Michael Page survey reveals that structured career progression was the most widely used tool (23% of respondents) for luring the best candidates.

The Robert Walters report highlights a chronic skills shortage among Japan’s junior workforce, due to various reasons such as the ageing population.

rate”, said Le Roux, with many firms starting to bring these roles back to Japan. This has, in part, occurred as a result of the weakening yen, the Michael Page report indicates.

“What has somewhat protected Japan is the need for Japanese language skills, which makes it hard for companies to offshore to the extent that occurred in the US and the UK”, he added.

Robert Walters sees this shift to staffing more in-house specialists as indicative of the hiring market as a whole. Firms have started taking on more permanent, qualified operations personnel, which has boosted hiring overall.

Further, many businesses in Japan that were pursuing an offshore human resources strategy last year “have discovered that the ‘total cost’ of offshoring is much higher than that of basic operational costs”, Hays’ Sampson said. This is due to the high expectations of Japanese companies for levels of quality, which is also reflected in the Hays salary guide.

In 2013, hiring in the finance industry was upbeat, with financial planning and analysis professionals most in-demand, according to the Hays survey. New roles are being created on a constant basis, whereas in recent years hiring was “erratic and drawn out”, Sampson said.

Professionals who have held leadership roles and possess experience collaborating with functions outside finance will be particularly sought after, the Michael Page report explains. Bilingual candidates who have worked abroad or for a “Big 4” accounting firm are likely to have several job offers.

The Robert Walters survey notes that increased competition for talent in this sector will push hiring managers to look outside of financial services to fill available positions. Managers willing to do so will benefit in the long term. The recruitment firm’s report also stresses heightened demand for IT candidates, including those who have worked in finance. Abenomics and renewed investments in technology are boosting opportunities for both contract and permanent professionals, it states. There will be increased competition for strong applicants in finance and tech venture companies.

The Michael Page report also notes hiring growth in the technology sector, particularly in financial services, network and telecommunications, as well as commercial jobs. Project managers will be needed to coordinate newly designed application and infrastructure-focused initiatives. Demand is expected to increase for application development roles as well.

Salary increases are anticipated for high-calibre candidates within this sector, according to the Hays report. Demand is high in the life sciences, retail, supply chain and technology industries for senior IT executives. The survey also emphasises that employers will be looking for not only existing skills in candidates, but also for people willing and able to learn new technologies when needed.

When Abe took office, he highlighted several growth industries—areas with strong potential for exports. Medical services and devices was one of these, and hiring in the life sciences industry has been robust as a result.

In addition to long-term unfilled positions in healthcare, new roles are appearing regularly, the Michael Page report states. Medical science liaisons, clinical research associates (CRAs) and regulatory specialists are in highest demand, in large part to facilitate relations between pharmaceutical firms and healthcare institutions.

A government push for innovation in pharmaceuticals is also driving demand for CRAs, according to the Hays survey, due to the flow of new drugs across various therapeutic areas. The role of a CRA entails supporting and monitoring clinical trials. The introduction of new drugs is also boosting the need for staff skilled in product marketing and sales within the medical sector.

The Robert Walters survey points to a lack of sales and marketing professionals qualified in regulatory affairs, drug safety and quality assurance. Consequently, the report says, salaries in this sector have gone up by at least 5%. 🇯🇵

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By **Chieko River Furuta**

- Held many high-level ministry posts
- Renowned for English-speaking ability
- Helped contain cholera epidemic

On a very cold snowy morning, about 100 armed soldiers barged into my great-grandfather's residence in Akasaka and ruthlessly murdered him.

This assassination, known as *Ni Ten Ni-Roku Jiken* (26 February incident of 1936), is very significant, because his death empowered the Japanese military and spurred the nation towards World War II.

My great-grandfather was born on 27 July 1854, the illegitimate son of an Edo Castle landscape painter and a maid. He was named Korekiyo Takahashi at four days old, when he was adopted by Koretada Takahashi, a member of the lowest echelon of the samurai class who worked for the Date family.

During his lifetime, Korekiyo Takahashi served Japan in various capacities. He was minister of finance for seven terms, the 20th prime minister, the first minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the

Great Legacy of “Japan’s Keynes”

Korekiyo Takahashi’s fiscal plans were similar to Abenomics

first minister of commerce and industry, and the seventh governor of the Bank of Japan. Takahashi also established the Japan Patent Office, acting as the first director general of both the Trade Mark Office and the Patent Office—just to mention a few of the distinguished positions he held.

While to some people he is known for selling bonds abroad and funding almost half of Japan’s expenses to fight the Russo–Japanese War, he is perhaps most famous for the financial policies he implemented during his fifth term as minister of finance. This term coincided with a time of huge suffering, when Japan was in the depths of the Great Depression.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Abenomics strategy is, in many ways, a take on Takahashi’s plans, which dramatically reversed deflationary policies and had fully restored Japan’s economy by 1935, five years before the financial recovery in the US.

Takahashi’s unusual upbringing and complete mastery of the English language were fundamental in his numerous contributions to society. At the age of 10, he began studying English in Yokohama under Clarissa Hepburn, the wife of medical missionary James Hepburn, who romanised the Japanese language.

During the 1860s, most Japanese studied English at a Dutch school in Nagasaki, where they learned by translating books and newspapers. As a result, the students there could barely speak English. However, several students besides Takahashi studied under Mrs Hepburn and developed oral fluency. Tadasu Hayashi, who later became ambassador to Great Britain and a foreign minister, was another of Hepburn’s pupils.

Following his studies, Takahashi began working as a gofer for one of the British banks in Yokohama. Later, he gained passage to the US, where he stayed for a couple of years to perfect his English-language ability. When he returned to

Japan at the age of 14, he embarked on a career in government and taught English to many historical figures.

His English skills led him to be repeatedly chosen to translate several foreign regulations that became the foundation for many Japanese laws. At 18, he entered the postal service, in which capacity he translated British and US postal regulations for use in Japan.

In 1877, when the cholera epidemic was wreaking havoc on the nation, the interior ministry formed a group of Japanese and foreign experts to tackle the problem. Takahashi took charge, gathering all documents from Europe and the US concerning the disease. He and his team worked tirelessly to translate the paperwork, creating a manual on how to contain and prevent a pandemic. Thousands of lives were saved as a result.

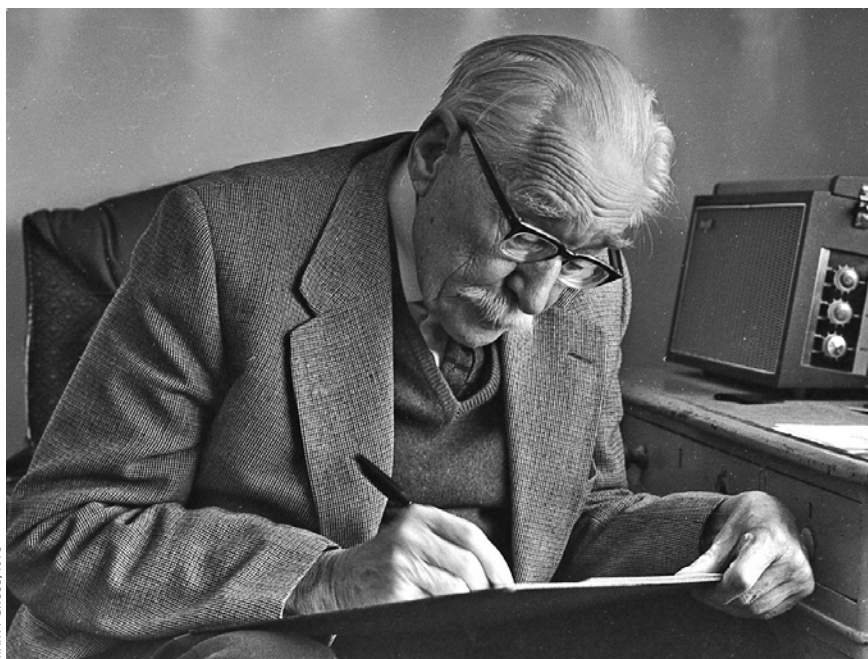
A few decades ago, the Japanese education system stopped including lessons about Takahashi in school curricula. So, as part of the effort to keep his legacy alive, we established a company named after him. My great-grandfather’s nickname was *Daruma Saishou* (Daruma Minister) and, in memory of this, Daruma Energy was launched in July 2013. It is currently the only energy firm that is a member of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

As a further homage, our office is located on the first floor of Place Canada in Akasaka, Tokyo, which is adjacent to Takahashi Korekiyo Memorial Park, the very place where my great-grandfather was assassinated that snowy morning on 26 February. A part of Place Canada is built on what used to be Takahashi’s land, so I believe it is with divine guidance that we have come to operate here. 🌸

If you’d like to read more about this great man and his accomplishments, I recommend Richard J. Smethurst’s *From Foot Soldier to Finance Minister: Takahashi Korekiyo, Japan’s Keynes*.

Art of the Potter

UK–Japan collaboration spawned craft movement



MARTY GROSS, 1975

Bernard Leach was an acclaimed potter, writer and teacher.

By **Brandi Goode**

- Film project to preserve legacy of Mingei
- Emphasis on utilitarian ceramics
- Merges cultures of the East and West

More than 100 years ago, an Englishman travelled to Japan intending to teach Western printmaking techniques.

A wanderer in many ways, Bernard Leach (1887–1979) was constantly searching for new truths in cultures apart from his own. In 1911, his life took a dramatic turn, when he was invited to his first “*raku* party”. These gatherings focused on the creation of *raku*, a form of Japanese pottery fired using low temperatures.

“By this to me a miracle, I was carried away to a new world. Enthralled, I was on the spot seized with the desire to take up the craft”, Leach wrote.

Fifteen years later, Leach, along with artist-craftsman Shoji Hamada and philosopher Soetsu Yanagi, founded the Mingei Movement. The influence of this approach to craftsmanship would forever change the world of ceramics.

BCCJ ACUMEN caught up with Marty Gross, a Canadian filmmaker who has collected footage documenting Leach’s life and work, and his path to becoming a forefather of what is now described as the Studio Pottery Movement.

Over the course of his career, Gross was fortunate to meet and interview Leach, along with others who were instrumental in the evolution of ceramic artistry. He is now compiling a DVD box set with five hours of films, essays on the footage and transcripts of new and archival interviews concerning Leach and the profound impact of the Mingei Movement.

Finding beauty in ordinary objects

The Mingei philosophy evolved against the background of industrialisation.

Before factories began churning out everyday objects, potters were creating bowls, vases and other goods to satisfy the needs of their communities.

Finding beauty in everyday objects is at the core of the movement. Roughly translated as “art of the people”, the term *mingei* is used to describe folk art made by anonymous craftspersons who produce what can be perceived as extraordinary works. In contrast to much of modern pottery, form emerged from function, and prices as well as superfluous elements were minimal.

Mingei is considered a true East-meets-West movement, as the aesthetic values inherent in the Japanese style merged with modern techniques honed in Western nations.

The founders

When Leach stumbled on Japanese pottery, he was fortunate to gain the confidence of several people who contributed to the cultivation of the Mingei philosophy.

The Shirakaba Group included intellectuals and artisans in Japan who were actively introducing contemporary European artistic trends to the nation. Leach was welcomed into the fold as the first foreign artist.

“The Shirakaba Group members met as students of Tokyo’s prestigious Gakushuin, or Peers School, where DT Suzuki was an English teacher for several years. Suzuki was the world’s most important exponent of Japanese Buddhist thinking. His influence on Soetsu Yanagi provided a vital thread



Masu Minagawa, legendary teapot decorator

Finding beauty in everyday objects is at the core of the movement.

in the evolution of the Mingei ideas. Leach was the key foreign inheritor and exponent of this thinking”, Gross said.

Yanagi is often credited as the central thinker of the Mingei Movement, and was a prolific author. His essays on Buddhist concepts of beauty eloquently describe the ideas behind the movement. A lifelong friend of Leach, Yanagi introduced the potter to Buddhist aesthetics.

The objects he admired in pottery villages were created using only materials available from local sources. Every area had its particular natural resources, each of these possessing special qualities and limitations. Mashiko, in Tochigi Prefecture, is an area made famous for its pottery in large part due to the exceptional quality of its clay. The town was also chosen in 1930 as the site of Shoji Hamada’s workshop.

Hamada, who during his life was designated a Living National Treasure, became an enduring comrade and colleague of Leach’s after their first meeting. He returned with his friend to England in 1920, and together they set up a pottery in St Ives, Cornwall. Today, the Leach Pottery still stands on the original site, and contains both exhibition and working spaces for visitors and artists.

Although Hamada has been described as Leach’s soulmate, they were men of different temperaments. While Leach “was a great talker, writer and teacher in addition to being an important craftsman and artist”, Gross said, “Hamada was a man of few words”. Despite being well travelled, the Japan-born potter preferred working to speaking or writing.

“[Hamada] embodied a renewed vitality in tradition-based craftsmanship”.

Origins and legacy

Leach and Hamada’s relationship serves as a microcosm of how the Mingei Movement united East and West. Leach introduced to Japan traditional English slipware techniques and the addition of handles—on cups and other vessels—which were completely foreign in rural communities. He also taught potters the European method of salt glazing, which Hamada “used to great effect”, according to Gross. “[Hamada] embodied a renewed vitality in tradition-based craftsmanship”.

Heavily influenced by both Japanese and Korean rural pottery, Hamada possessed a strong scientific grasp of his materials and processes. Leach was inspired by the simple, natural beauty of Hamada’s work and excited by the craftsman’s brilliant use of traditional forms and techniques.

“Perhaps the strongest and most long-lasting of Leach’s contributions is the enduring impact of his introduction of Japanese aesthetic culture in crafts to the world”, Gross said.



Shoji Hamada in his studio, 1934

The ideas behind the Mingei Movement belonged to a wider intellectual exchange occurring in the early 20th century. Just as the West was being exposed to Eastern philosophy and concepts of beauty, European notions of the arts and design were infiltrating Japan. The latter were incorporated in the Arts and Crafts Movement, led by renowned UK artists John Ruskin, William Morris and Eric Gill, among others.

Leach’s cup of tea

Japan’s traditional tea ceremony figured in Leach’s ideal of the local aesthetic.

The *raku* parties that first captivated the artist in 1911 can also be traced back to the tea ceremony, which places a high value on serving utensils.

Gross explained, “The sensibility of beauty in tea bowls, so clearly described in the writings of the great tea masters, including ideas such as *wabi* and *sabi*, were entirely new and very enchanting to Leach...These clearly articulated standards of beauty revolutionised his thinking and gave him a new vocabulary for talking about pots.

“For Leach, Japan was always the paradigm, but he was very mindful of British traditions as well.

“The *mingei* idea still has an important place in the Studio Pottery Movement and in the ongoing discussion about meaning and purpose in crafts. Even in this eclectic age, in which materials and influences are global, the *mingei* concept of beauty in objects of daily use is an important part of the discussion.

“In fact we now see industrial designers everywhere working to incorporate the sense of the touch of the human hand in objects made by machines”, Gross said. ✦



Hamada (second row, left) with his family and Leach (third from right, front) in Mashiko (1934).

Marty Gross will be visiting Tokyo on 10 March to speak about his project.
www.britishcouncil.jp/en
www.martygrossfilms.com

ARTS UK EVENTS in JAPAN

Compiled by Kana Shimoyoshi

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27 FEBRUARY–2 MARCH

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Tokyo International Players is proud to present an original take on William Shakespeare’s classic love story, directed by Wendell T. Harrison. This production takes the fabled “star-crossed lovers” out of Italy and transports them to Dejima, off the coast of Nagasaki. Also, the Capulets are Japanese and the Montagues are expatriates, speaking in both English and Japanese, with subtitles in both languages.

Pocket Square (090) 6009-4171
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27, 28 February: 7pm
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www.tokyoplayers.org

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LET IT BE

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4–9 MARCH

Let It Be

This Beatles-themed “theatrical concert” has fascinated audiences in London since September 2012. After a run on Broadway, it will finally come to Japan in March. With around 40 of the band’s greatest hits performed in period costumes and choreography from the Beatles’ heyday, the show will transport viewers to the 1960s.

Tokyu Theatre Orb 4, 6, 7 March: 7pm
Shibuya Hikarie 11F 5 March: 2pm, 7pm
2-21-1 Shibuya 8 March: 1pm, 6pm
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8510 9 March: 2pm
0570-00-3337
Adults: from ¥5,800 (weekdays)

www.let-it-be-japan.com



HIROKI NISHIOKA

10–17 MARCH

Wilko Johnson's "Going Back Home Tour Japan 2014"

Guitar legend Wilko Johnson, known for his machine-gun playing style, was a founding member of rock band Dr Feelgood, which is credited with shaping the English punk movement. Johnson was diagnosed with terminal cancer in January 2013 but refused chemotherapy to have the strength to complete this farewell tour.

10, 11 March shows at Shibuya Club Quattro are sold out.

03-5720-9999
Adults: ¥6,500

17 March: Liquidroom, Tokyo

<http://doobie-web.com>



FROM 29 MARCH

Par ked

After losing his job and house in England, Fred returns to Ireland. Depressed and downtrodden, he lives in his car near the ocean. One day he meets Cathal, a young "neighbour" also living in his vehicle. Fred embarks on a journey of self-discovery through his friendship with the boy. Starring Colm Meaney from the *Star Trek* series.

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Albert Moore, 1887, *Midsummer*; photo reproduced with the kind permission of the Russell-Cotes Arts Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth

UNTIL 6 MAY

The Beautiful

Art for Art's Sake: The Aesthetic Movement 1860–1900

The Aesthetic Movement was founded in London in the mid-19th century. This exhibition contains about 140 paintings, drawings, pieces of furniture, crafts and jewellery from leading British museums, including the Victoria and Albert Museum. Enjoy the world of beauty and pleasure created by artists Albert Moore and Oscar Wilde, among others.

Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum,
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10am–6pm (until 8pm Fridays
except holidays; closed Mondays)

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Adults: ¥1,600

Free tickets

We are giving away five pairs of tickets for this event.

<http://mimt.jp/beautiful/>



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7



8

1. US Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy (centre) with Steve Crane (left), CEO of Business Link Japan, and Lori Henderson MBE at The Entrepreneur Awards Japan, at the Embassy of the United States in Tokyo on 29 January.
2. Ambassador Tim Hitchens CMG LVO (left) conducted an investiture ceremony for Hisashi Hieda, chairman of Fuji Media Holdings and Fuji Television, at the embassy on 21 January. Fuji Television introduced TV content such as “Thomas the Tank Engine” (see page 9) in Japan.
3. Attending the BCCJ’s “51 Night Shinnenkai” at Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo on 31 January were (from left): Michael Coombs, representative director and president, Coca-Cola Central Japan Co., Ltd.; his wife Keika; and Brian M. Gregory, director, SCT Inc.
4. Jamie Reigle, managing director of Manchester United Ltd. for the Asia-Pacific region, spoke at the BCCJ’s “Manchester United—A British Club’s Relationship With Japan” event on 17 January at the Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo.
5. Attending an afternoon tea at the Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo, on 28 January were (from left): Kumiko Fukuzawa and Shikiko Masutomi of the British Embassy Tokyo, and Katsue Takeshima and Tomoko Hisaki of VisitBritain.
6. Nicholas Patterson, executive pastry chef of the soon-to-open Shangri-La Hotel at the Shard, London, hosted an afternoon tea event at the Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo, on 28 January.
7. *Private Utopia: Contemporary Art from the British Council Collection* opened in Tokyo on 18 January at the Tokyo Station Gallery.
8. Liverpool-born Diane Kichijitsu performed *rakugo* storytelling in English at Katsushika Symphony Hall, in Tokyo, on 25 January.
9. *Tokyo Portraits*, an exhibition by UK artist Carl Randall, began on 16 January at The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation in London.
10. Actor Mirai Moriyama stars in *The Drudgery Train*, a film that was screened on 4 February at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London as part of the Japan Foundation’s “East Side Stories” film festival.



9



10

What the UK Media Taught Me About the Truth

By Ginko Kobayashi

Reading the newspapers was one of the first things I did after moving to the UK in 2002. Now I read them mainly for my job as a journalist, but also for pleasure.

Before coming to Britain, I was a reporter at the English daily newspaper published by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (then the *Daily Yomiuri*, now *The Japan News*). Back then, a newspaper was, to me, something I tasked myself to produce to fill a blank space, not an object for the joy of reading.

As soon as I moved to London, I noticed that many passengers on the trains read newspapers—in 2002 at least—in contrast to their Japanese equivalents, who would doze off or look at their mobile phones.

Just as my fellow passengers, I used to pick up the newspapers that had been left behind by the previous readers. I subsequently began to subscribe to newspapers at home and occasionally browsed some of the popular papers that show women's semi-nude bodies.

I learned that a paper with a daily photo of a woman's naked breasts, namely *The Sun*, is not something you can ignore as a journalist, as it reaches a massive readership and therefore has the

political power to influence voting during elections, or so it is believed. It was also enjoyable to read brilliantly splashed headlines in the popular press that mix humour and wordplay.

I learned that British newspapers have clear views on the issues of the day, including ones of a political nature. Neutrality is not required. It is up to readers to decide what to believe or where the "truth" lies. Impartiality is for broadcasters such as the BBC to maintain.

There are varying degrees of political stances in Japanese newspapers as well. For example, my former employer, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, has been recognised for its implicit support of the Liberal Democratic Party and conservative political forces in general. Nevertheless, members of the Japanese press as well as the public believe that newspapers are supposed to be neutral in their editorial stance and writing style. This is in stark contrast to the British newspapers and their public, who know that the papers are not fully objective and love their media for it.

Last October, the BBC broadcast a television programme titled "No Sex Please, We're Japanese". Based on the reactions of my Twitter followers, I learned that some people in Japan had assumed the programme was offensive without having watched it. Actually, the segment highlighted the serious issue

of ageing in Japan, and many of the Japanese living in Britain who had seen the programme approved of it.

On the whole, Japanese tend to overreact to stories about Japan in the foreign media. Some of them claim the stories are inaccurate if they don't like what they see. At the same time, ironically, there is also a blind belief by others that foreign press such as *The New York Times* are always credible because of their international prestige.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake struck in March 2011, I heard the Japanese media disappointed the public with their coverage of the disaster. Some people said the local media became a public relations machine for the Japanese government, bureaucrats, academia and Tokyo Electric Power Company. Others criticised the media for not taking sufficient risks in reporting, as the press rigidly observed the government-set rules forbidding entry to dangerous zones.

I was in Britain when the disaster hit. From my home in London, I saw leading British journalists flying to Japan immediately after the crisis to report from the Tohoku region. Their reports were of a high standard and replete with facts and insight. But the reports by Alex Thomson, a correspondent from Channel 4 News, particularly tugged at my heartstrings.

At one point, the camera showed Thomson standing in rubble. The camera then provided a 360-degree view of the scene surrounding him. Thomson said it was unlikely that anyone would be able to live here for a long, long time. It was a devastating comment for the villagers from the area, but the panorama showed very plainly that this was the likely outcome. I believe he was one of the first journalists to utter this cruel but truthful comment.

I wonder, if a reporter from a Japanese media outlet were in the same spot at that time, would he be bold enough to say such a thing? Or would he keep his mouth shut so that the report "would not worry the public", a phrase often used by the authorities as a reason not to reveal the full truth to the media?

"It is up to you to decide what's what" and "telling the truth, however painful, comes first as a journalist" are among the things I have learned from the British media. 🇬🇧



From the Horse's Mouth

This year, Tokyo governor's race and Winter Olympics are events to watch

By Ian de Stains OBE

According to the lunar calendar, the Year of the Horse began at the start of February. The Chinese zodiac's 12-year cycle is also moderated by five elements—wood, fire, earth, metal and water. This year's element is wood. If you believe in astrology, this bodes well for the year, especially because wood tends to tame the occasional impetuous tendencies of the horse.

What might we expect this year? At home, all eyes will be on the battle for Tokyo governor. Few people in my own circle (whether Japanese or foreign) will lament the political demise of former governors Shintaro Ishihara and Naoki Inose, but what are we to make of the record 16 individuals who are running?

Most foreign residents of the capital, myself included, know little about many of the candidates. Since we are in any event disenfranchised, most of us will pay little attention. But this is a mistake: the governorship of the capital city is a serious position. Think of Boris Johnson in London; if only there were so colourful a candidate here!

And—hold your breath—are we not nearing a time when foreigners with a genuine stake in Japan, those who pay taxes, those with Japanese spouses, those owning property, those with permanent residency, should perhaps have a vote at the local level? I, for one, would value that. I would also, in return, be willing to serve on a council or committee, somewhere I could make a contribution to the community in which I live and that I hold in great esteem. But I suspect this is not an idea whose time has come quite yet.

Of all those standing in this month's election, one candidate seems to invite the most interest. Morihiro Hosokawa, Japan's 79th prime minister (1993–94), has the very public backing of another former prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi (2001–06). Hosokawa is a Tiger and Koizumi a Horse: a potent combination in a month when the Lunar New Year turns.

It is striking that Hosokawa is basing his campaign on a complete rejection



of nuclear energy. He and those who support him are essentially opposing the declared policy of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In the wake of the 11 March 2011 disasters in the Tohoku region, the nuclear issue is in the spotlight. But there are other factors in play, many of which have not been discussed.

If you look at the records of both Hosokawa and Koizumi, their general stance towards Japan's neighbours—especially China and South Korea—could not be more different from that of the hawkish Abe. Just look at their respective positions on visits to Yasukuni Shrine, not to mention previously expressed regrets for wartime aggression. It is almost certain that Japan-watchers in both Beijing and Seoul will be paying close attention to the outcome of the election.

Moreover, they will be analysing the comments each candidate makes in public to get a sense of Tokyo's potential future sentiments towards them. Polling day (19 February) will be closely watched. With a record number of candidates, we are hoping for a strong voter turnout and a result that delivers a governor who can stand ready to lead Tokyo into the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games with pride and honour.

Queering the pitch

Controversy surrounds the Sochi Winter Games ahead, with Russian

President Vladimir Putin having equated homosexuality with pederasty and—forgive the pun—queering the Olympic pitch. It is difficult to know whether gay athletes (and those who sympathise with them) should boycott the Games or stand defiant. The US has made its position very clear, with President Barack Obama sending a delegation including some very prominent gay and lesbian personalities.

Why does this issue continue to be a problem? Can we not just grow up? But just when you think it is safe to get back in the water...

David Silvester is a British local councillor and member of the UK Independence Party. He is also convinced that the flooding that has recently hit the country is a direct result of Prime Minister David Cameron's decision to approve gay marriage.

I am not making this up. According to the righteous councillor, God looked down on the UK and decided to wreak vengeance, devastating great parts of the land, inconveniencing thousands of innocents—by far the greater part heterosexual, by the way—much as He did with Hurricane Katrina in the US, where gays were also blamed, to the huge satisfaction of such intellectual sophisticates as Sarah Palin.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all got back to the old-fashioned idea of horse (common) sense? 🍷



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“Psychobiotics”: the Gut–Brain Link

Probiotics may affect anxiety and depression

By **Dr Lee Andrew Kissane**

- Many Japanese foods contain probiotics
- Mood may be linked to gut bacteria

Recently, an interesting paper from the journal *Biological Psychiatry* caught my eye over my morning *natto*. The paper’s three authors coined a new term in the text and, just maybe, introduced a concept that could turn a page in biological psychiatry.

Most people probably are familiar with the term probiotic, as used in the context of health food marketing. Probiotics are live bacteria that help maintain a healthy gut. A healthy human gut contains 1–2kg of such bacteria, and there is solid evidence that certain probiotics can be used to treat irritable bowel syndrome and some types of inflammatory bowel disease.

Lately, consumer interest in probiotics has spiked. Nutrition shops and supermarkets back home are full of these products. But readers in Japan do not have to visit a health food shop to dine on probiotics: popular fermented foods you see here every day are full of these bacteria—think *natto*, miso and kimchi.

The paper summarises a body of recent evidence that some of these probiotics are capable of producing and delivering neuroactive substances that act on the brain–gut axis and, therefore, may impact mental health: particularly depression and chronic fatigue syndrome. The authors propose a new term for this subtype of probiotics: psychobiotic. This they define as “a living organism that, when ingested in adequate amounts, produces a health benefit in patients suffering from psychiatric illness”.

Sound farfetched? Not necessarily. It was reported in 2007 that some *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* strains can produce GABA, an inhibitory neurotransmitter. Since then, further evidence has been published showing

how other bacteria in the gut can produce acetylcholine, noradrenaline, serotonin and, possibly, dopamine.

All of these substances are neuroactive; GABA and noradrenaline are the neurotransmitters implicated in anxiety and depression. Further, oral ingestion, by rats, of *Bifidobacterium infantis* has been shown to increase the blood plasma levels of tryptophan, an amino acid found in many foods. Tryptophan is thought to have some antidepressant properties. There is also evidence linking depression to alterations in the gut microbiota, or gut flora.

Having the right bacteria in your gut is not enough; eating the right foods with the right kinds of fibres is also important.

The human gut is inhabited by 10^{trn} microbes, consisting of over 1,000 species and more than 7,000 strains. There are maybe 10 times more microbes in a human than there are human cells. Most of the microbes are bacteria that we start acquiring after birth and throughout infancy.

Evidence shows that babies born by caesarean section have different microbiota than those born naturally, and the complexity of this flora increases dramatically in all babies with weaning. Gut microbiota is generally altered by infection, disease and diet. There is also proof that stress can play a role.

How do these bacteria affect mental health? Three mechanisms have been proposed.

First, there are well-established links between gut bacteria and immunity, and immunity and depression. It has been suggested that probiotics alter the levels of inflammatory mediators circulating in the body, which may cause depressive symptoms.

A second proposed mechanism is through the direct or indirect effects of probiotics on stress hormone production. In mice, it has been shown that abnormal stress hormone responses can be induced by raising the mice in sterile conditions, and that these abnormal responses can be reversed by the re-introduction of specific bacteria to the gut.

This confirms that the bacterial content of the gut is critical in the development of an appropriate stress response later in life—at least for mice.

A third possible mechanism, proposed by two University of Oxford doctors in the same edition of *Biological Psychiatry*, is dependent on the ability of gut bacteria to metabolise certain fibres into specific fatty acids. These acids are then absorbed in the large intestine, with a small amount reaching the brain.

Having the right bacteria in your gut is not enough; eating the right foods with the right kinds of fibres is also important, so these fatty acids can connect with the brain.

To conclude, are these psychobiotics good for treating depression?

Some interest in the theory has arisen in the scientific community, but no significant trial data have emerged. In the first paper, the authors summarised three short placebo-controlled studies using probiotics—two in healthy volunteers and one in patients with chronic fatigue syndrome. All showed positive results in measures of distress, mood and anxiety. The authors have called for large-scale, placebo-controlled trials to detect which probiotics have psychobiotic potential.

Until such data are available, the only reason to eat *natto* is the taste. 🍱



The Devil's in the Detail

Football's biggest brand is picky about business partners



By **Julian Ryall**

Photos courtesy of Manchester United Ltd.

- Ranked world's most popular team
- Japan followers number 8mn
- Brand appeals to advertisers
- New eight-year partnership with Aon

A football behemoth for the best part of the past 20 years—although fans of rival teams are revelling in its present mediocrity—Manchester United (Man Utd) is just as much a colossus of the global business world.

As well as success on the pitch, getting the club's message out is becoming increasingly critical to winning the support of the estimated 1.7bn followers of the game worldwide. That certainly applies to fans in Asia, believes Jamie Reigle, managing director of Manchester United Ltd. for the Asia-Pacific region.

"We are the number-one club in the world, and I don't mean that in an arrogant way, but in terms of our overall activity, both on and off the pitch", Reigle said at the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan event at the Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo, in mid-January. "We are in the entertainment business, and a big part of what we do is constantly asking ourselves what would someone like Disney do with Manchester United.

"We have to constantly raise our game and we benchmark ourselves against the best and biggest businesses in the world", he said.

The Red Devil's wide-reaching promotional campaigns are clearly having an impact; Man Utd is now ranked the most popular team in the world, with around 659mn followers—98% of whom are outside the UK. While it has 3mn fans in Britain, the team has 8mn devotees in Japan. The club's Facebook page is available in 20 languages and has an impressive 37mn followers.

"We have a long history of being in Japan and that has been enhanced with the signing of [midfielder] Shinji Kagawa", Reigle said. "We first played a game here in 1989 and have been back seven times since, on summer tours and to play in the Club World Championship in Yokohama".

In its corporate form, Man Utd "tries to behave like a local business" and prefers to forge partnerships with specific types of firms.

"In Japan, one of the partnerships of which we are most proud is with Kagome", he said. "They were one of our first regional partners and they came to us



Kagome and Aon are regional partners of the team in Asia.

with a very clear idea of what they wanted to get out of the relationship”.

Kagome Co., Ltd., famous for its vegetable drinks, first linked up with the team in October 2012. The firm insisted from the outset that it wanted to tell the story of the regeneration of areas of north-eastern Japan that had been affected by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Former players from the club, including striker Andrew Cole, have visited Tohoku and led soccer schools for local children. Other similar projects are planned.

Reigle says Man Utd has transcended merely sport and evolved into a brand that encompasses entertainment, making it very interesting for advertisers and retailers.

It has achieved this in large part by melding tradition with innovation.

The team’s home stadium has been on the same site in Manchester since 1910, and some £10mn is spent every year on upgrading the facilities. Beginning in the 1950s with the Busby Babes—the group of home-grown players who formed the first team under Matt Busby—through to the nurturing of young talent at the club’s academy today, Man Utd’s strategy has enabled it to turn out such names as David Beckham and Ryan Giggs.

“We try to develop stars, tending not to buy star players at their peak”, Reigle said. “We consider that to be our investment in research and development.

“And players like Beckham and Ronaldo are famous for being very good at what they do, but they transcend sport to contribute to the brand”.

The development of the Man Utd name appeals to advertisers.

Phil Clement, chief marketing officer of Aon Corp., stated in a *Financial Times* interview in May 2013 that the club’s global reach made it a sound investment.

“Compare it to running an advertising campaign in 120 countries”, Clement said. “Advertising is difficult. To have one programme that works globally, externally and internally—that’s a nice value proposition”.

Aon signed an eight-year partnership deal with Man Utd worth an estimated \$240mn, with the insurance broker’s name now prominent on the team’s shirts. This reaches an estimated global television audience of 49mn people every time the team plays a match.

As Reigle said, “There are very few properties that have that kind of reach and response”.

The club is not content to rest on its laurels, however, and despite having its merchandise distributed in more than 10,000 retail outlets worldwide and selling a staggering 2mn replica shirts each year, new initiatives are still in the pipeline.

“The special thing about football is the shared experience, and we want to try to recreate that”, Reigle said “We have

carried out three tests on United viewing parties, in New York, Jakarta and New Delhi, as a brand-building activity, and the response has been excellent”.

More than 21,000 people applied for the 7,500 seats that were up for grabs at the Jakarta event. Many fans got to meet former players, who made presentations before kick-off and provided commentary throughout the match to create a heightened user experience.

The project is scheduled to be rolled out in Tokyo in the coming months, which will add a new dimension to following Man Utd in one of its heartlands. 🇬🇧



Andrew Cole, Hidenori Nishi of Kagome and Jamie Reigle

True to Form

Red or Dead paints picture of Bill Shankly

NAOYA SANUKI

By Julian Ryall

- Author's staccato writing style riled critics
- Spent nine years teaching before first book
- Praises Liverpool manager's persistence

“I ran out of books to read so I decided to write the book that I wanted to read”.

David Peace's latest book, *Red or Dead*, may have “divided the critics”, he said, but the support of the family of Bill Shankly, the famous former manager of Liverpool Football Club (FC), and the club itself mean more to him than a provocative review.

“That’s the nature of the book”, the Tokyo-based author said with a shrug. “It is in that style and is written about a man who was out of step with his time. Socialism was a part of the way Shankly was brought up and the way he lived his life, going against the grain”.

Raised in Ossett, West Yorkshire, 46-year-old Peace returned to live in Tokyo in 2011 with his wife and two children after living in the UK for two years.

Named by *Granta* in 2003 on the “Best of Young British Novelists” list, Peace shot to prominence with *Red Riding Quartet*. His reputation only grew with his subsequent novels: *The Damned Utd*, based on Brian Clough’s short spell as manager of Leeds United Football Club in 1974, and the three thrillers set in post-war Japan that began with *Tokyo Year Zero*, published in 2007.

Inspired by his father’s efforts to write a novel, Peace said he knew he wanted to be an author at the age of eight.

“Even after I started writing, there were plenty of moments of self-doubt”, Peace said.

After obtaining a degree from Manchester Polytechnic, Peace spent two years writing a book while on the dole and, in 1992, sent the product of those two years to every publisher in the UK. It was rejected by each of them.

“That was the lowest I’ve ever felt in terms of my writing”, he said. “I wanted a complete break and went to Istanbul in 1992 for two years, and that was the only time that I never wrote anything. I came to Japan in 1994 and started teaching in Shin-Koiwa in Tokyo.

“I didn’t know the language and didn’t know anyone, so I regularly went to used bookshops—this was all before the internet—and I read, read, read. In the end, I ran out of books to read so I decided to write the book that I wanted to read”.

Peace’s first book was heavily influenced by American-style crime novels. Habitually an early riser, he used to put in five hours before going off to teach and then come back in the evenings to revise the manuscript. It was not until nine years later, however, that he could finally give up teaching. Today he still rises at 5am before putting in a full day at the office researching or writing.

“Football is relentless like a river and I wanted to try to capture that river of repetition with short sentences, incremental change”.

Not all the reviews of his latest book have been completely positive, with some critics finding his trademark use of repetition and short staccato sentences uncomfortable.

“I always insist that the style comes first”, he said. “With *Red or Dead*, it was a novel, not a biography of Bill Shankly”.

The book follows Liverpool FC’s rise from 1959 to 1974. Peace says he did not write it for supporters of Liverpool—

“because they all know it by heart anyway”—but more for people outside Liverpool and football, and to show what Shankly did for the city and the club.

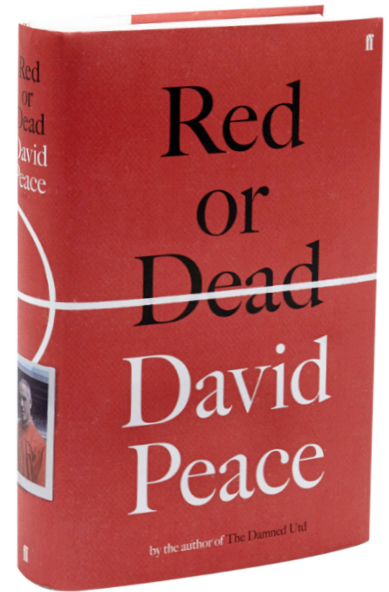
“I also wrote it for my son and my daughter because the man and those times are such an antithesis to modern life, the quick fix, the sense of entitlement that people have now”, he said. “There’s no sacrifice or struggle today.

“The repetition is in there to underline the struggle he had to go through. There were seven years when Liverpool didn’t win anything, although they came really close, and Shankly just went back and started again.

“I thought about that as I was trying to record it”, he said. “You can’t take a shortcut; you have to write about it. It uses simple language; football is relentless like a river and I wanted to try to capture that river of repetition with short sentences, incremental change”.

The reception from Merseyside has been “great”, Peace said, with Shankly’s family supportive and generous. That’s a testament to the man and the family, he added.

“It’s a trait of the Shanklys to bring out the best in other people. The fact that ex-



players like Willie Stevenson have come out and said I got it 85% right and hearing that these people liked the book has been like a magic shield to me”. 🇬🇧

BCCJ ACUMEN has one copy of *Red or Dead* to give away. Send an email to: editor@custom-media.com for a chance to win.

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The Man Behind the Curtain

Biography of Laurence Olivier digs into actor's personal life

As a child, Laurence Olivier (1907–89) claimed he wanted to become the “greatest actor in the world”. For many, he fulfilled that ambition, and there are numerous biographies that bear out that contention. So many, in fact, that it is worth questioning why Philip Ziegler and his publisher thought it worthwhile turning out another.

In truth, this new biography reveals nothing that has not been discussed before when it comes to Olivier's career. Still, it looks far more closely at his personal life and the demons that drove him. The book is wonderfully crafted; Ziegler has a fine ear for detail and writes with great clarity and expression, making the biography a compelling read. Even at almost 500 pages, the pace does not flag and the reader is not overtaxed.

Olivier's dazzling career is recorded in meticulous detail: the disappointments are recounted as well as the triumphs. His championing of London's Old Vic Theatre and repertory company, and his determination to see through the establishment of the National Theatre, are soundly charted.

The latter endeavour was not by any means an easy row to hoe, and the reader is left in doubt as to the debt the nation owes. It is so easy, today, to take the South Bank for granted as a centre for theatrical excellence. The struggle to set it up, however, and create the company that would populate it, would prove to be as challenging and dramatic as much of what would later be presented on its stages.

Olivier would have been unable to pursue so much of his stage ambition—not to mention his comfortable lifestyle—if it had not been for his lucrative film career. This, too, Ziegler explores in some detail, including the Hollywood box-office hits as well as Olivier's own (successful) attempts at directing some of William Shakespeare's greatest plays.

Through this discourse we learn a good deal about Olivier's relationships with some of the other greats of the era. Here are John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Michael Redgrave and Alex Guinness, all rivals to some degree and yet he worked

with every one of them. Memorably, he and Gielgud alternated the parts of Romeo and Mercutio in Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers. We can only lament that there were no means to capture such performances on film or otherwise in those days. The shows were, by contemporary accounts, outstanding.

Nevertheless, Olivier's relationships with his peers were not always smooth; he admitted such in one exchange: “You know what a c--- I can be”.

Where Ziegler's biography truly breaks new ground is in discussing Olivier's personal life. His first marriage to Jill Esmond resulted in a son, Tarquin. By his own admission, Olivier was a delinquent father. He was also an inconstant husband. Throughout his life Olivier indulged in numerous affairs with his leading ladies and others, and those accounts are examined appropriately.

His second marriage to Vivien Leigh is quite rightly explored in great depth and with great sensitivity. She was extremely beautiful and very talented, but increasingly suffered from clinical depression over the years of their union.

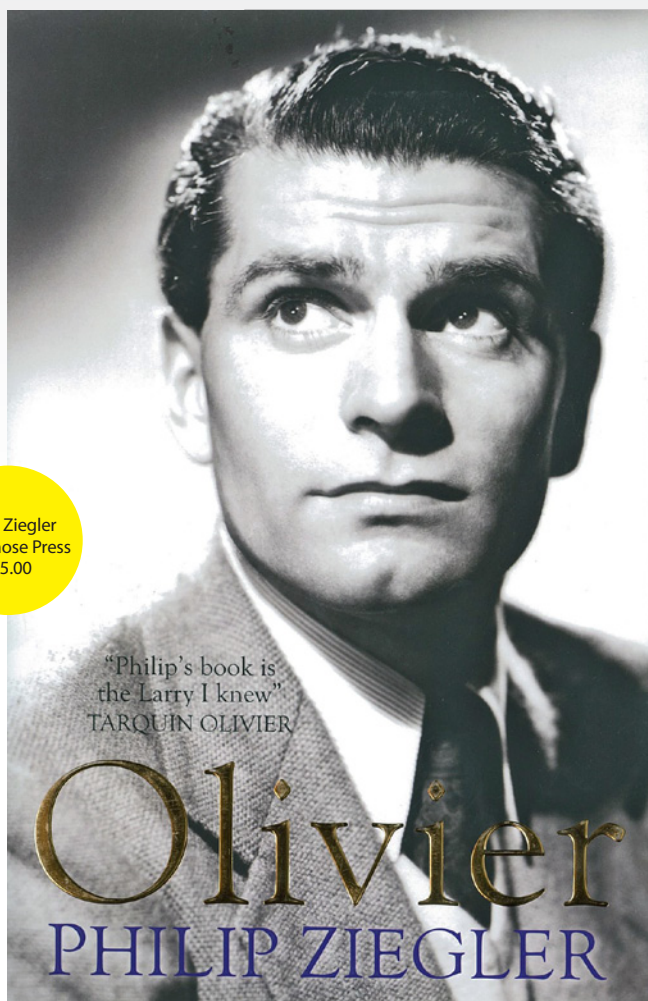
Ziegler paints a powerful portrait of the way in which the couple sought to maintain an outward picture of domestic bliss while dealing with mutual infidelities and a deteriorating hold on reality. Finally Olivier is rescued by his relationship with Joan Plowright—his third wife, Lady Olivier—but even then he appears unable to remain faithful.

This is—in the clichéd term—a warts-and-all biography. It serves its subject well by and large, but it is fair to say that Olivier does not emerge as a likeable man.

What is also true is that for someone who played so many roles with which people can strongly identify—Archie Rice, John Tagg and Henry V among others—we do not really get to know Olivier himself. But that should not come as a surprise; those who worked most closely with him claimed the same. He even said it of himself.

Olivier could walk down a street and not be recognised: he looked like a banker or someone from the city. And yet, when he walked into a room that mattered to him, he turned heads and electrified it. ✚

Philip Ziegler
MacLehose Press
£25.00



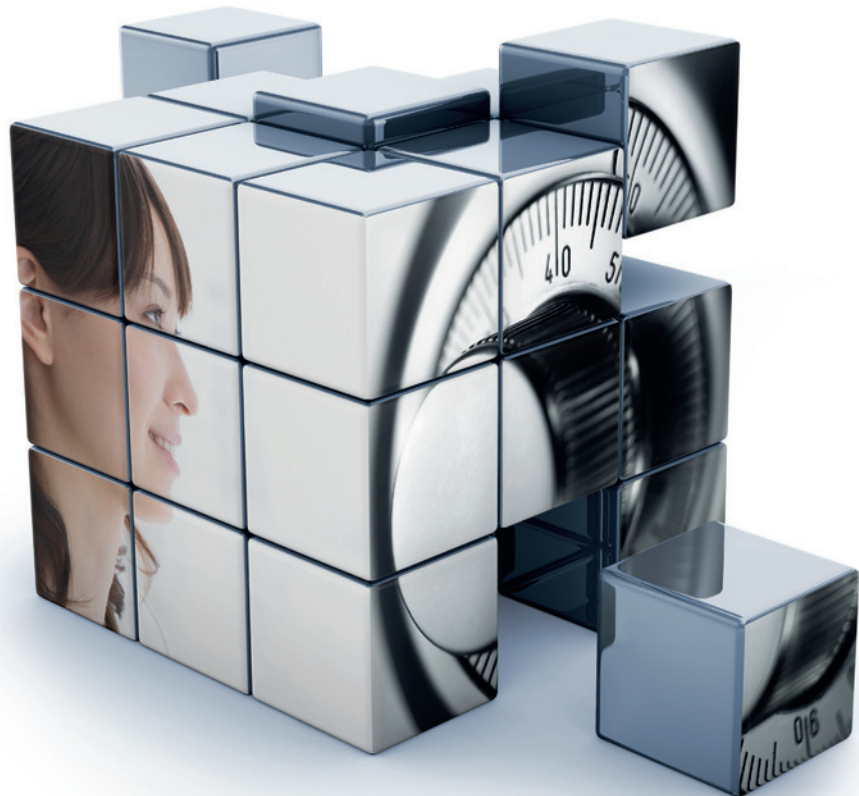
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