

The magazine of the
British Chamber of
Commerce in Japan

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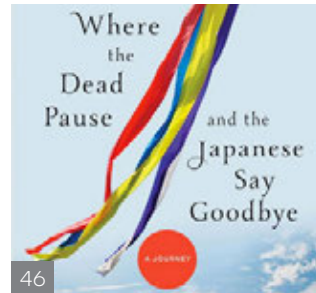
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I was disappointed when I discovered the visit to Japan by Prince William, The Duke of Cambridge, coincided with a business trip I was taking. Off to the UK in association with VisitBritain, I would neither witness what impact the Japan visit would have on the duke or on the local people whose lives he would touch. Yet, my time in England gave me something perhaps more interesting and valuable—the perspective of someone looking on events from the outside.

Strong, bilateral friendship

From the UK's national news reports to the personal conversations of its citizens, the British population demonstrated that it is interested in—and cares about—not only the activities of the duke, but of Japan and its people. This warm relationship is one that British Ambassador to Japan Tim Hitchens CMG LVO believes will continue to flourish in the 21st century (page 9).

Also made apparent during my time in the UK was a deep-rooted concern among people there regarding the recovery of the Tohoku region, following the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which occurred four years ago. To mark the anniversary,



Two views

Nurturing UK-Japan ties

KATHRYN WORTLEY

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BCCJ ACUMEN has charted the story of two UK film directors who, in making a documentary about football club Vegalta Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture, discovered the strength local people gain from being fans of the team, and the dramatic impact that strength has had on their lives (page 28).

A special community page devoted to photos taken during

the royal visit provides a glimpse of the range of activities in which the duke was involved over the four-day period (page 42).

Gardens nourish growth

The duke's father, The Prince of Wales, has also had a dramatic impact on the development of UK-Japan relations. The gardens at his Highgrove House residence

are thought to have been one of the first of their kind to be promoted in Japan, thus helping to establish the English garden as an asset that can boost trade and tourism.

The dedication and innovativeness of British firms to make quality products for an art form they love is widely appreciated by Japanese garden enthusiasts, while UK gardens are one of the biggest factors affecting tourists' choice of travel destinations (page 18).

I saw this phenomenon first hand during my recent trip to Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire. Well-known as the birthplace of former Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the vista of the garden from the property's entrance was described by his mother as "the finest view in England". It was created by Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716–83), who is considered England's greatest gardener. Such is the demand to see this rich heritage that Japanese guides are employed and a range of literature is available in Japanese.

Of all Britain's attractions, gardens are some of the most popular. More details of what Japanese tourists want in the UK, the reasons for their choices and how this could impact businesses will be featured in *BCCJ ACUMEN* soon. 🌸

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Warm welcome for The Duke of Cambridge

Special message from Tim Hitchens CMG LVO,
British ambassador to Japan

I am delighted to send a message to the readers of *BCCJ ACUMEN* on the occasion of His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge's visit to Japan.

The duke visited for four days, from 26 February until 1 March. The first trip to Japan by a senior member of the royal family since the visit of The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall in 2008 and The Duke of York in 2013, it was also the duke's first time here. Speaking before he arrived, he said he was personally looking forward to building a relationship with, and an understanding of, Japan and its people.

In preparation for his big arrival, I was struck by the support, excitement and generosity of our friends in Japan. Like any member of the British royal family, the duke's life attracts a lot of attention, but particularly so in Japan. For both the royal wedding in 2011 and the birth of Prince George in 2013, we received many kind messages from all over the country that show the great warmth and affection in which they are held by Japanese people.

This sentiment reflects the deep and abiding relationship between the UK and Japan. I do hope that many people in Japan got the opportunity to experience this first-hand as the visit unfolded.



The Duke of Cambridge met the Emperor and Empress of Japan in Tokyo.
©BRITISH EMBASSY TOKYO/ALFIE GOODRICH

During his travels in the country, the duke hoped to meet as many people as possible.

The visit was rich in symbolism: an introduction to Japan bringing together moments of slow reflection, fitting for a future king of the UK, as well as the fast-paced modernity of youth and the generation that the duke represents. The programme had a number of themes, not least the importance of UK-Japan cultural and commercial exchange and how tradition and innovation are aligned in modern Japan.

After taking ceremonial tea with a tea grandmaster and seeing some of the sites of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the duke turned his attention to the many UK-Japan partnerships, from young, cutting-edge entrepreneurs to established scientists, as well as international space station astronauts, who are pushing the bounds of human capability.

It is on this basis that the duke launched the UK government's Innovation is GREAT Britain

campaign and a public exhibition in Tokyo. The initiative seeks to promote further partnership between our two countries by showcasing and stimulating bilateral business, research and education collaborations that tackle global problems and improve lives through innovation.

In celebration of the duke's visit, a wide range of innovative British products were displayed from 27 February until 4 March at DAIKANYAMA T-site, a stylish bookshop designed by a British architect. As well as showcasing a variety of innovative British products, the buildings were wrapped in Innovation is GREAT-themed projection mapping and hosted "Great British Days" from 20 February until 16 March, featuring UK-related books of every genre.

Of course innovation is just one facet of Japan. Beyond Tokyo, the visit also gave the duke a chance to pay his respects to the thousands of people affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami

of 11 March, 2011, almost exactly four years ago, and to highlight the ongoing need for support in the recovery of the affected areas. The duke visited the town of Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, where 3,275 people were lost to the tsunami and the whereabouts of 430 people are still unknown.

About 22,000 residents lost their homes and 53,000 homes were damaged. The duke spent a morning meeting local people and hearing how communities are rebuilding their lives. They have been supported through initiatives—such as those set up by the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan—that have played an important role in helping small businesses get back on their feet, with small grants such as for a bread slicer at a bakery or a fridge for local fishermen. These, and many other small acts, were vital in the immediate aftermath of the disaster and have helped the community recover.

The duke's first visit was one of contrast: old and new, city and country, high speed and slow pace. Yet, it has a consistent message: Britain and Japan have a long partnership that stretches back more than 400 years, and can continue throughout the 21st century. It is a partnership which is here to stay, and in the safe hands of a new generation. 🌸

MEDIA

The Blues score sponsor deal

Chelsea Football Club has signed a five-year, shirt-sponsoring agreement with tyre manufacturer the Yokohama Rubber Co., Ltd., the *International Business Times* reported on 27 February.

Expected to bring the club £40mn per year, the deal is the second biggest in the history of English football, and

will go into effect at the start of the 2015–16 season.

According to the chairman of the Japanese firm, Tadanobu Nagumo, “This shirt partnership with Chelsea will give Yokohama an opportunity to showcase our company to a huge, worldwide audience”.



Yokohama and Chelsea reps ink a sponsorship deal in London.

Selling niche skills

Transport Minister Baroness Kramer has visited Japan to raise the profile of British firms and their transport expertise, according to a press release dated 29 January (see page 43).

During visits to Hitachi, Ltd., Toyota Motor Corporation and Nissan Motor Co., Ltd., all firms that support significant numbers of jobs in the UK, Kramer discussed ways of strengthening cooperation in research and development. Further, she emphasised the country’s knowhow in rail, ultra-low emission vehicles and driverless technology.

“I am keen to ensure that our supply chain is engaged with Japan’s development plans in upcoming major projects such as the Olympics. The UK has a great deal to offer in terms of expertise, high quality products and services”, she said.

Lobby group asks BT boss to be first female on board

The president of BT Japan Corporation has become the first female vice-chairman appointed to the advisory board of Keidanren, the Japan Business Federation, *Japan Real Time* reported on 10 February.

Aged 50, Haruno Yoshida is one of the youngest leaders ever appointed to Keidanren. A conservative group, composed almost entirely of men in their sixties who have spent their careers in one firm, the chief business lobby has previously pushed back against some of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s steps to empower women.

Chairman Sadayuki Sakakibara said the move was a first step, and that there could be a woman in the post of vice-chairman or chairman in the future.

Site revamp to help mental health needs

TELL has launched a new website that includes an anti-bullying video contest to address the country’s growing mental health needs, *Japan Today* reported on 18 February.

Run by Executive Director Ian de Stains OBE, the English-language service, formerly called Tokyo English Lifeline, has redesigned its online presence to increase awareness of mental health issues, support those who require help and promote fundraising events.

On www.telljp.com, designed by Custom Media K.K., visitors are invited to create videos as part of the charity’s anti-bullying campaign.



The fresh look of the TELL website: www.telljp.com

TBS show on ITV

A localised version of *Ninja Warrior*, a programme format owned by Tokyo Broadcasting System Television, is set to appear on Britain’s ITV in spring, according to a press release issued 18 February.

Building on its success in its home market and popularity in the US, Sweden and Malaysia, the new British entertainment series promises to show the toughest assault course on UK TV.

Some 250 contestants from across the country will battle challenges testing strength, speed and courage in a bid to scale Mount Midoriyama and be crowned *Ninja Warrior UK*.

Pharma firms in global move

Sosei Group Corporation has acquired a clinical-stage private UK-based biotechnology firm to share development of innovative medicines, according to a press release dated 22 February.

Heptares Therapeutics Limited will become a wholly owned subsidiary of the Japanese bio-

pharmaceutical firm, while retaining its existing R&D operations in the UK.

It is hoped the tie-up will create a global biopharmaceutical group with access to pharmaceutical markets worldwide and regulatory expertise across the EU, Japan and the US.

Former leader warns Wales about nuclear plant threat

Naoto Kan was in Anglesey to campaign against the construction of the Wylfa Newydd nuclear plant, the *North Wales Chronicle* reported on 25 February.

The prime minister of Japan at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and now an anti-nuclear campaigner, Kan encouraged

developers Hitachi, Ltd. to halt their plans on the island.

“It is clear to me that what caused [the 2011] catastrophe was our commitment to an unsafe and expensive technology that is not compatible with life on this planet”, he said.

He later met Anglesey councillors and held a local meeting.

ANA aircraft order to benefit Bristol staff



Airbus will supply its A321 plane to ANA. • © AIRBUS S.A.S. 2014

Airbus S.A.S. has secured an order from ANA Holdings Inc. for its single-aisle aircraft, the *Bristol Post* reported on 2 February.

Based in France, the firm has secured an order similar to one placed in 2014 that will support its Bristol unit of some 4,000 staff. Here, engineers design the wings for all its aircraft.

John Leahy, chief operating officer for the firm said, “We are extremely pleased that such a prestigious airline as Japan’s ANA has placed repeat orders for our A320 family aircraft”.

Tokyo 1st, London 18th for safety

A study by The Economist Intelligence Unit shows that Tokyo is the safest city in the world, according to a press release dated 27 January.

In terms of air and water quality, the Japanese capital came second and sixth, respectively, while London was placed sixth and fourth. Overall, the UK capital was

ranked 18th, but was the only city surveyed that received a perfect score for safety in relation to construction for its Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012.

The Safe Cities Index 2015 ranks 50 urban centres worldwide across five continents, measuring security in digital, health, infrastructure and personal terms.

Tenor breathes new life into 1975 Queen classic

Prolific opera tenor Ken Nishikiori has received online acclaim for his rendition of Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody”, *Japan Today* reported on 2 February.

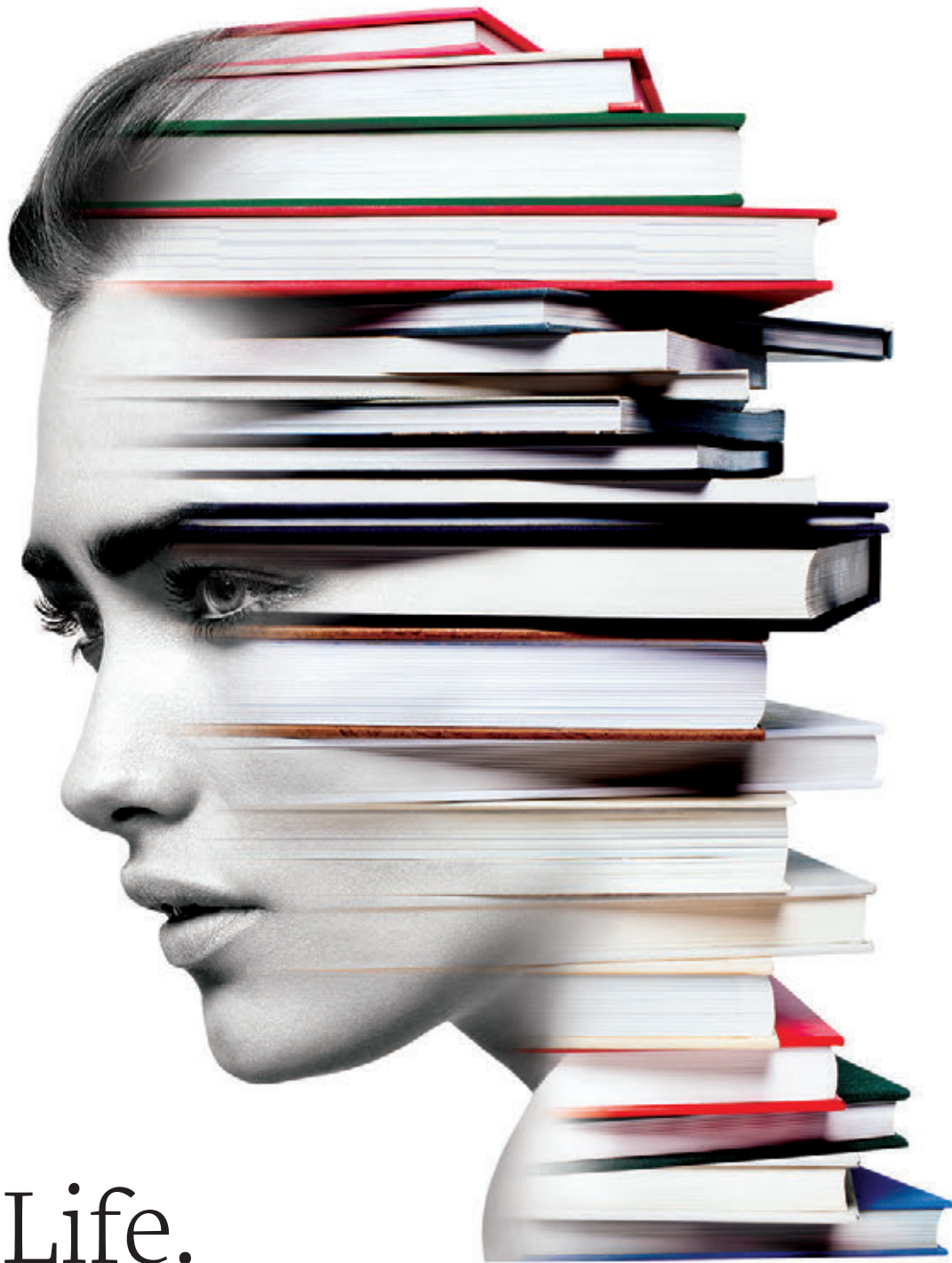
Celebrated as a successful singer, the 55-year-old front man of the Shimane Ken Band reportedly knows the song thanks to his father’s musical influence when he was growing up.

Since the band’s label uploaded the cover of the British rock band last year, the song has attracted an increasing number of viewers, with many commenting that Nishikiori’s vocal rendition sounds hauntingly similar to that of Freddie Mercury.

The Safe Cities Index 2015



A study by The Economist Intelligence Unit ranked 50 urban centres worldwide.



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FT WEEKEND
Experience a different world

On 1 March, in association with the UK government and the Royal Household, the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) introduced The Duke of Cambridge to communities in Miyagi Prefecture. The region received support from the BCCJ Back to Business (B2B) initiative in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

The duke visited a museum that exhibits hand-written newspapers created in the wake of the disaster by Hiroyuki Takeuchi and his team at *Ishinomaki Hibi Shimbun*. Writers used bicycles—received via the B2B initiative in 2011—to travel from their emergency shelters to the newspaper office and to connect with survivors.

Personal stories

The duke then met Shinichi and Ryoko Endo, who tragically lost their three young children to the disaster. A carpenter, Mr Endo presented a gift of a *hyoshigi*. This small percussion instrument, comprising a rope connecting two wood clappers, was made by combining tsunami debris with English oak.

The couple shared an update of their activities with non-profit organisations Team-Watahoi and the Taylor Anderson Memorial



Spotlight on Tohoku

The Duke of Cambridge visits Back to Business sites

LORI HENDERSON MBE

Fund. The latter was set up by parents of Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme participant Taylor Anderson, who was taken by the 2011 disaster. In connection with this organisation—I am honoured to be a board member—Mr Endo has constructed shelves for libraries in local elementary schools to promote English-language learning.

Culture and art

Travelling to Hiyoriyama Park, the duke met British Consul-General Michael Shearer OBE and Ishinomaki City Mayor Hiroshi Kameyama. One of our B2B local leaders, Kyoko Sasaki, read the poem, “To the Survivors” by 100-year-old local resident Toyo Shibata. Two children, one of whom remains in temporary

housing, gave the duke paper cranes symbolising hope.

The final stop was the Chime of Hope shopping area, where the duke was welcomed by Onagawa Mayor Yoshiaki Suda and a local dance troupe. The duke playfully succumbed to being “bitten” by a lion operated by children. At the Onagawa Art Guild, he was presented with a picture combining the Union Flag and a lucky carp. Its creator Shuhei Sakimura led B2B volunteer activities in 2012, painting fishermen’s warehouses with designs that link the UK and Japan.

Helping trade

Takahiro Aoyama of the Onagawa Chamber of Commerce then guided the duke to the town’s remaining bell. Aoyama was instrumental in establishing the shopping area of about 30 small businesses. The B2B initiative provided solar panels, making business and community activities possible after dark.

On ringing the bell, the duke was greeted with cheers from the crowd, among who were representatives from our local B2B initiative partners.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our B2B work. It’s been a privilege to link communities in Tokyo, Tohoku and the UK. 🌸

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MEDIA

ADVANCES IN DISTRIBUTION BOOST INTERNET SUPERMARKET SALES

Acknowledging the UK as “the country with the world’s most competitive market for online supermarkets,” *Nikkei Business* (2 February) devoted a page of its issue on distribution to examining the rapid growth in this sector.

As a result of looming labour shortages as well as pressure to boost efficiency and cut fixed costs, Japan is keen to acquire foreign knowhow.

In the UK, experts generally agree that year-on-year growth in the number of Internet supermarkets was 10%–15% in 2014 for total sales of £8,100mn, and accounted for 5.5% of the total market for food.

During last year’s Christmas shopping season, retailer Sainsbury’s (J Sainsbury plc)—the UK’s third-largest supermarket chain in terms of revenue—announced a 30% rise in online sales in 2013.

Tesco PLC is generally acknowledged as having introduced the idea of online supermarkets to Britain in 2000. Other similar chains are said to have held back, mostly out of concern that distribution costs would be higher. But, according to Professor Fiona Ellis-Chadwick of Loughborough University, the fear of losing out prevailed.

“They realised that if they didn’t jump in, rivals would make off with their customers,” she told *Nikkei Business*.

According to retail research agency and consultant Conlumino, five major supermarket chains, including Tesco and ASDA, account for some 90% of online supermarket sales. The former alone accounts for annual sales of £3,000mn, nearly 40% of Tesco’s total revenue. Most players have taken a negative view of net sales, mainly because the profit margin on food items is generally low and operations face additional costs for delivery, payment collection and other related activities.

The quest for greater efficiency led to the creation of dark stores: facilities that, not open to the public, house goods used to fill online orders. There are moves to convert more regular outlets to dark stores but, as these facilities alone are not expected to markedly improve profits, another service stage was devised.

“Click and collect” merchandise collection points are situated at such locations as underground and train stations, and car parks. These facilities pare down delivery costs, since customers pick up the goods at their



Tesco’s Click & Collect service appeals to UK customers.

convenience, eliminating the problem of their being absent from home when the delivery agent arrives.

According to predictions by Mike Watkins, head of retailer and business insight at Nielsen UK, were the number of orders picked up by customers at shops or collection points to rise to the point where they exceed home deliveries, it might mark the start of major improvements in profitability.

STUDY EXPOSES SNEAKY TRICKS TO SELL GOODS

Nothing gets more customers flocking to a shop on a whim than a “going out of business” sign, according to the *Sunday Mainichi* (8 March). It was reporting on a famous discount shop, near Tokyo Station, that for 16 years has been marketing itself as going out of business.

Now, however, the shop’s owner has attested the sign to be true, and has marked down to “¥3,000 plus consumption tax” every item in the shop—including pricey designer handbags.

In February, a survey by a student at Rikkyo University’s College of Law and Politics made

the news after it found instances of shops in Tokyo claiming to be preparing to close down, while actually having no intention of doing so. The student appealed to the government’s Consumer Affairs Agency, asking it to issue an advisory that the stores should cease such deceptive practices.

While many stores complied, expunging the term *heiten* (going out of business) from their signs, they are said still to be engaged in informing customers that special deals are available “today only”—for many days.

How do such shops manage to maintain profitability? Based on the assumption that 96 customers enter the shop each hour (resulting in a total of 768 in the course of an 8-hour day), if 3% made a ¥3,000 purchase, 23 customers would spend ¥69,000. If this figure were increased to 5%, 38 customers would together spend ¥114,000 a day.

The secret to the operations of these shops, according to an inside source, is that they procure merchandise in large quantities from wholesale operators that have gone

BURBERRY MOVES TO PROTECT LUXURY IMAGE

Since 1970, Sanyo Shokai Ltd. has been licensed to design, manufacture and sell garments under Burberry Group plc. However, the *Shukan Toyo Keizai* (7 February) reports that the 45-year contract with the luxury British brand will terminate in June. Thereafter, Burberry—which began preparing for this move in 2000—will supply the Japan market directly.

Sanyo will be the last overseas firm with which Burberry will have a tie-up. The agreement, initiated in the 1990s under a separate licence, has enabled Sanyo to sell Burberry garments in the Black Label and Blue Label lines.

Sanyo's operating profits from Burberry-related business are projected to plummet sharply, from ¥8,700mn at the end of the 2014 fiscal year (31 March, 2015) to just ¥200mn by the end of fiscal 2015.

Likewise, Burberry's licensing income from Japan—reported

to be £62mn for fiscal 2014—is expected to shrink over the short term.

Better brand perception

Beginning in July, following the end of the tie-up with Sanyo, the number of outlets and concessions selling Burberry-brand goods will fall from over 300 to 16 shops run by Burberry. By taking direct control of operations, the firm aims

under licence by Sanyo has sold for about half that price. This made the brand more of a mass premium, as opposed to a luxury marque.

Nevertheless, given Japan's position as the world's second-largest market for luxury goods, Burberry is optimistic about growth. It has set 2017 targets for its Japan unit of £100mn in sales, and £25mn in profits. If

that the 300 outlets from which Sanyo sold Burberry products had resulted in "overexposure" of the brand.

"We want to be more careful in choosing store locations", he said. In addition to its flagship store in Omotesando, the firm has shops in Ginza and Roppongi, as well as in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture. In addition, Burberry has announced it will open shops in Shinsaibashi, Osaka, this spring and in Shinjuku, Tokyo, this autumn.

Popularity high

"Japanese really like Burberry items with their distinctive checked pattern, and the brand has become a core tenant in regional department stores", a department store operator told the *Shukan Toyo Keizai*. "But considering the anticipated price increases, I suppose that the fan base the brand has enjoyed in the past will inevitably leave it".

Another department store source was more upbeat on Burberry's prospects. "It's far and away the top UK brand", he said. "If the company can build cooperative relationships with department stores, it will be able to acquire new, superior customers".

While Burberry's direct operation model has shown success elsewhere in the world, it is unclear whether it will have a similar impact in Japan, given that expectations and anxieties abound. 🇯🇵

"It's far and away the top UK brand",
[a department store source] said.

to establish itself worldwide as a luxury brand.

Up to now, wide price disparities have existed. While a standard trench coat, for example, has sold at directly operated outlets for upwards of ¥200,000, the same item produced

things go according to plan, the Japan market should eventually account for 10% of the brand's worldwide sales.

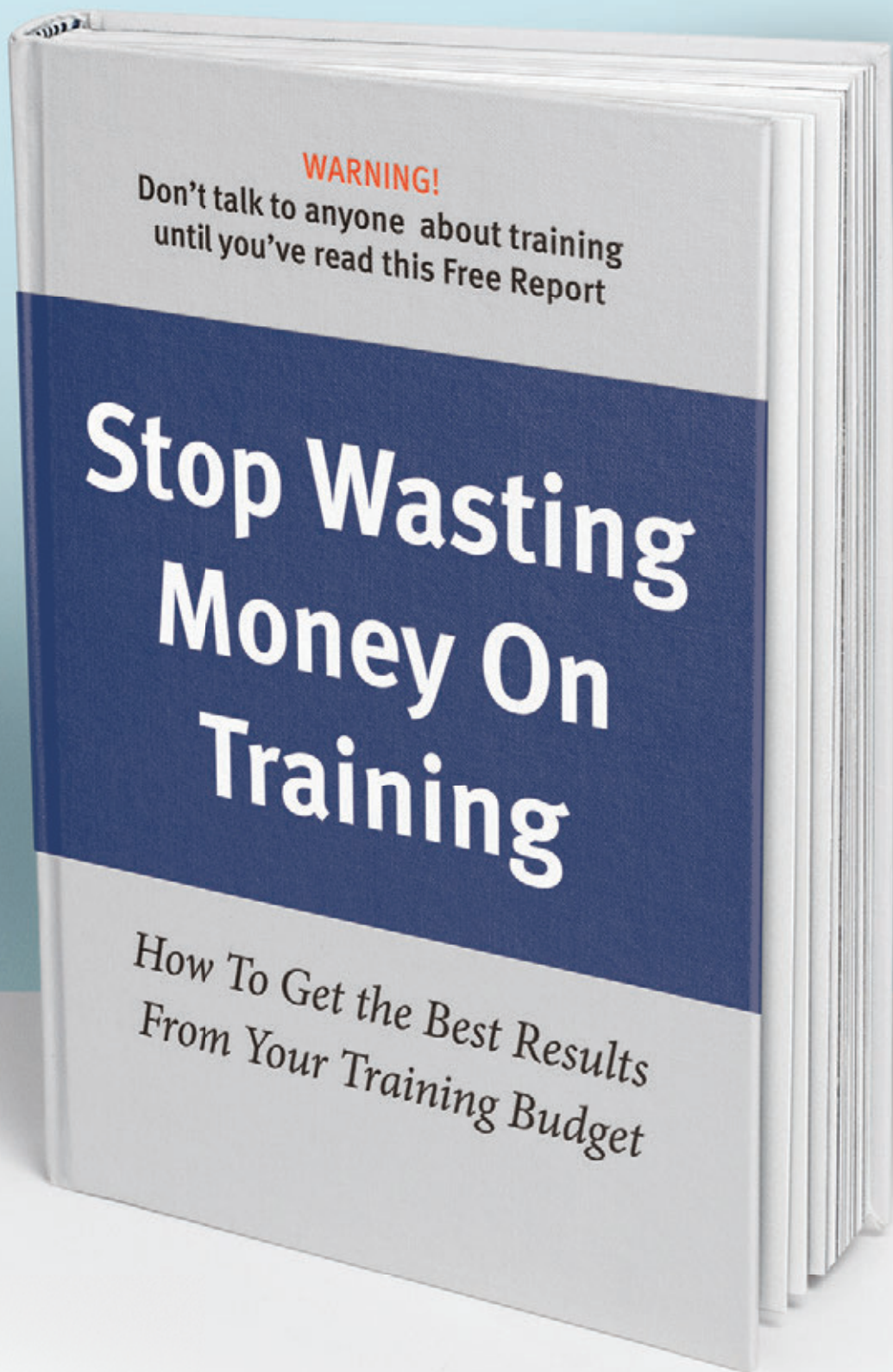
New shop locations

Pascal Perrier, chief executive of Asia-Pacific at Burberry, explained

bankrupt. The goods are then moved from the warehouse to one outlet after another, giving customers the impression that merchandise is undergoing a regular turnover. "In such cases", said the source, "a daily sales turnover of ¥100,000 will realise a decent profit".

However, "overdoing the claims may lead to charges of false advertising", attorney Takeshi Ozaki told the *Sunday Mainichi*. "So it's important that buyers feel satisfied and do not lose money on their transactions", he said.





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With the exception of the 2014 British Business Awards on 14 November, 17 February was undoubtedly the busiest day to date in the 2014/15 calendar of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ). We welcomed a total of more than 170 members and guests to breakfast and evening events, where respectively, speakers Lord Deighton KBE (page 26) and Paul Polman addressed the challenges of governance, accountability, and sustainability.

Art of communication

Deighton is Goldman Sachs's former chief operating officer for Europe and former chief executive of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, while Polman is former chief financial officer of Nestlé S.A. and chief executive of Unilever PLC. With these credentials, there was never a doubt that their presentations would be both entertaining and thought provoking. For me, however, it was their charisma and conviction as speakers that made them so engaging. It is proof again, for those who wish to inspire others, that great leaders are—first and foremost—great communicators.



BCCJ events, elections offer chances to engage

Call to contribute to AGM

DAVID BICKLE
@BCCJ_President

No less impactful, and hugely entertaining, was our event on 4 March with Neil Taylor, head of international BrewDog bars, and David Croll, chief executive of BrewDog Japan. Speaking to a packed audience at the brand's Roppongi bar, Taylor and Croll provided insight into the firm's business model covering the creation and—very importantly—

delivery of value through their logistics and bar network. The story of BrewDog's success provides a fascinating case study for managers and students of business alike.

Old and new

On 1 April we will move from hops to grapes and join our chamber friends from Australia, New Zealand, Italy and France at the

“Great International Chambers’ Wine-Off” hosted by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan. With Berry Bros. & Rudd flying the flag for Britain, this will be an opportunity for wine makers and distributors from each participating country to showcase their finest wines. Join us to find out whether there is a niche for the UK between the Old World and New World orders.

Engage and give

The highlighted events are a mere snapshot of almost 40 business and social occasions that the BCCJ has held this year—more than ever. We will continue to provide opportunities for our members to hear about and, it is to be hoped, learn from the commercial successes and struggles of others. I encourage you to browse the summaries that are being regularly posted on the BCCJ website.

If you would like to help shape the policies and objectives of the chamber, and our strategies for achieving them, I urge you to consider standing for election to the BCCJ executive committee at our AGM on 27 April. Details of the nomination and election process were emailed to members on 12 March and are on the BCCJ website. 🇬🇧



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PHOTO: TOWN & COUNTRY

ENGLISH COUNTRY GARDEN

“How many gentle flowers grow in an English country garden?

I’ll tell you now, of some that I know, and those I miss I hope you’ll pardon.

Daffodils, hearts-ease and flocks, meadow sweet and lilies, stocks,

Gentle lupins and tall hollyhocks,

Roses, fox-gloves, snowdrops, forget-me-knots in an English country garden”.

MORRIS DANCERS

Green fingers grow trade and tourism

Japan digs English gardens as UK science, skills and gear cultivate exports and bilateral ties

BY JULIAN RYALL

From the green masterpieces of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, to Koishikawa Korakuen in Tokyo, and from the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall to the verdant moss landscapes of Buddhist temple Saiho-ji in Kyoto, the British and Japanese share an appreciation of the natural beauty of the garden.

Part of a major business sector across the UK, horticulture firms are significant exporters to North America and Europe, and are hoping to explore more distant destinations. Of these, Japan has been identified as a potentially important market.

THE ENGLISH GARDEN (1782)

“Take thy plastic spade,
It is thy pencil; take thy
seeds, thy plants,
They are thy colours”.

WILLIAM MASON



British Embassy Tokyo, the firms generated a good deal of interest and a number of new opportunities.

Despite British firms' recent absence, Japanese gardeners still admire the quality of UK gardening equipment, inventiveness of British technology, and quintessential “Englishness” of some products.

“We last exhibited at the show five years ago and we have already enjoyed some success in the Japanese market”, said Andrew Jenkins, a spokesperson for Somerset-based Briers Ltd.

“The Japanese really do admire British gardening traditions, such as our informality and the use of colour and design”, he said. “It is a big help that in the Japanese market at present there is nothing like what we sell.

“There was great interest in our range, and that was in spite of problems with some of the stock for the stand failing to arrive”, he added.

Specialists in garden gloves and footwear—including pink-and-white polka-dotted PVC boots designed to make the wearer stand out from the gardening crowd—Briers already has two UK-based Japanese distributors. Jenkins

British firms have had designs on Japanese gardens for some time, points out Charlie Parker, commercial manager of Gardenex, the UK-based Federation of Garden and Leisure Manufacturers Ltd.

“The Japanese are very keen on gardening and we began taking our first groups of companies to Japan back in 1999”, Parker told *BCCJACUMEN*. “That was, in part, thanks to a huge boom in interest in British gardening that had started a few years earlier with a large feature on the gardens of Highgrove House in a Japanese magazine”.

The family residence of The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, Highgrove has gardens that are extensive and have been the pride and joy of Prince Charles for the past 25 years. They have also been used to put into action his philosophies on organic and sustainable horticulture. All green waste is recycled, natural predators are encouraged in order to keep garden pests under control, and only natural fertilisers are used.

The prince's garden really caught the imagination of green-fingered Japanese, Parker explained. Up to 30 British firms took part in early expeditions to attend the Japan Gardening Fair in Tokyo. The event later became known as Gardex, the country's largest garden industry trade show.

“There was a gradually growing interest at that time in the sorts of things that British companies could provide”, he said. “But that halted suddenly with the disasters in Tohoku”.

Following some years of inactivity after a decision that it was not quite time to test the waters in Japan, the organisation made another approach to the market in October. It supported a modest three-strong British delegation to take part in the three-day Gardex 2014 show, the most important annual date on Japanese garden-lovers' calendars.

With a Union Flag prominent above the member firms' booths and the support of UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) at the



Dignitaries opened Gardex 2014 in Tokyo on 15 October.



Porous Pipe's water systems deliver gentle and precise watering.

used the exhibition to explore additional distribution routes.

"We know there is potential in the market for British-designed and, preferably, British-made garden and garden-associated products", he said. "And we are confident that we will continue to sell and to grow the business as we have done in every other market—although that does depend in part on budgetary restrictions and exchange rates".

The distance between Japan and the UK does make budgets a concern for small and medium-size firms, admitted Erick Mackay, sales and marketing director and investor at Irrigatia Ltd.

Nevertheless, the business, based in Yorkshire, has already shipped its first order to Japan. What is more, Mackay's presence at Gardex has led to the signing of a distribution deal with a local firm that was already importing water butts from the UK.

"We are a small company, but just last year grew sufficiently to justify the investment involved in paying our first visit to Japan", Mackay said.

Irrigatia has devised an ingenious automatic garden irrigation system that utilises solar power and is suitable for properties of all sizes—a key consideration for a market where gardens are usually small.

"We had a fairly good reaction at the event", said Mackay. "The Japanese appear to have a similar culture towards gardening as the UK ... and they do harvest rainwater in water butts, which is crucial to our ability to sell our products".

Mackay was also delighted to discover that no products similar to the Irrigatia range are available in Japan. He believes that having gone the extra mile—printing Japanese text on the boxes of products on display, as well as having installation and operating instructions available in Japanese—made a positive difference.

Another water management firm taking part in the trade mission was Porous Pipe Ltd, which is headquartered in Lancashire. It collected no fewer than 40 potential business leads at the event.

"Gardening is the purest of human pleasures".

FRANCIS BACON, PHILOSOPHER

"Many retailers and landscapers were not familiar with the type of product that we have and were very interested in trying it out", said Amanda Clegg, business development manager for the firm.

As the name suggests, Porous Pipe supplies watering systems and hoses that permit water to seep through their outer surfaces, delivering gentle and precise watering. Made in the UK from recycled materials, the firm's products are ideal for garden borders, fruit and vegetable plots, as well as greenhouses and cloches.

"There are already products like this for the professional market in Japan, but competition in this area is strong", Clegg said. "There is constant interest in alternative types of products, so I believe that our target should be retail sales to gardeners.

"We already have a small distributor in Japan and we work with a UK national who has a landscaping business and now also a store in Tokyo, so we are keen to work with them to expand and open up other opportunities", she said.

"I do believe there is potential for our company in Japan and we offer retail packs for the home gardener in small lengths, and micro-irrigation solutions for patio and planter applications".

Firms in the horticulture sector attempting to get a welly boot in the door of the Japanese market have benefited from the assistance of UKTI in Tokyo. Akiko Yanagisawa, head of the



Porous Pipe Ltd's stand at Gardenex in Tokyo



Irrigatia Ltd.'s automatic garden irrigation system uses solar power.



Bright and fashionable kneepads
PHOTO: TOWN & COUNTRY

creative and consumer industries team, is keen to encourage further penetration.

“For Japanese, gardening is part of the iconic culture and heritage of Britain, and this sector goes a long way to helping raise the image of the UK here”, Yanagisawa told *BCCJACUMEN*.

“We had a lot of success in the mid-1990s until around 2000 and we were working very hard to create even more interest with the domestic trade press and consumer magazines”, she said. “In all, we brought nearly 100 British companies into Japan at that time”.

That boom in interest had a knock-on effect on other sectors, with tourism into the UK, in particular, seeing a spike in Japanese tourists wanting to visit some of the most famous gardens.

Inevitably, Japanese firms, as well as manufacturers in other parts of Asia, noticed the surge in sales and suddenly started turning out gardening items that looked very similar to the original British products, but at a fraction of the cost.

Some loyal customers, impressed by the quality of their British gardening equipment, stuck with their tried-and-tested suppliers, but many opted for the cheaper, but similar, knock-offs. That was a serious blow to UK importers, particularly when combined with Japan’s broader economic downturn, the impact of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011 and, more recently, the weak yen, which makes imports more expensive.

“We believe that British importers, more than ever, now need a unique selling point for their products—a strong brand story, strong design values and a selection of items to succeed in Japan”, said Yanagisawa.

“Also doing well are companies that sell gardening fashion items, like bags, gardening aprons or boots—that are uniquely British and satisfy customers from that point of view.

“There has also been solid growth among companies with famous heritage brands and technologies that are more advanced than anything that is already on the market here, such as watering systems with a specific advantage in technology or design”, she added.

From the manufacturers’ perspective, Gardenex’s Parker agrees there have been challenges for UK firms to overcome, but he remains upbeat about the opportunities here.

“I know that deals have been agreed since last year’s event and that discussions are ongoing between some other companies”, he said. “My experience of the Japanese market is that it can take some time for a firm to get bedded in, but UK companies have had a lot of success already.

“We have talks coming up with the British government about the support they might be able to extend to our sector and, as long as those discussions go well, we are hoping to get a larger group coming over to this year’s Gardex”, he added. 🇬🇧

“Also doing well are companies that sell gardening fashion items ... that are uniquely British.”



Floral patterns are popular.
PHOTO: TOWN & COUNTRY

CLASSROOMS WITHOUT WALLS

Supporting young people's character development



BY BRIAN CHRISTIAN

The British School in Tokyo (BST) aims for excellence in all that it sets out to achieve. It is self-evident that, for the many parents who choose to send their children to the school, outstanding academic performance is a priority. Indeed, there is no getting away from the fact that examination grades are a valuable measure of the quality of teaching and learning, and schools that fail to deliver the results that students deserve will quickly find themselves exposed.

But, real education extends well beyond exam preparation. At BST we work hard to make sure that the children entrusted to us are given every opportunity to become happy, caring young adults. Our hope for them is that they might aspire to be willing team players, who are prepared to step aside from the crowd and be leaders; intelligent risk-takers driven by curiosity and a thirst for learning; interested—and interesting—human beings.

Our school community is proud of our students' examination statistics, and of the impressive list of schools, colleges and universities all over the world where they have gained hard-won places. Yet, more gratifying than any of this is the students' strength of character, sense of fairness and consideration for others, as well as broad range of skills and enthusiasm.

Character development is currently the subject of much heated debate in educational circles. Is this really something that schools can teach? At BST we argue that we should challenge—and support—our students in a way that encourages self-confidence, resilience and a sense of adventure. In this area, we believe that one of the very worst things one can do to children is to fence them in with low expectations: it holds back their development.



When we expect more from them than they expect themselves, they grow in self-belief, derive greater personal satisfaction and begin to develop character.

This does not necessarily mean, though, that such attributes can be taught; and it certainly is



not meant to suggest that the best way to teach young people to swim is to throw them in the deep end. At BST, within the safety of a caring environment, we set our students demanding challenges—and we are prepared to see them fail occasionally. We aim to instil in them the confidence to risk stepping outside their comfort zone. What is more, we allow them the privilege of making mistakes—because mistakes are precious gifts to someone who really wants to learn.

It is for this reason that many of our objectives lie far beyond the walls of the classroom.

On the sports field and in the concert hall, up mountains and on stage, BST students acquire skills, develop interests and face challenges that will equip them with the attributes they will need to thrive in adulthood. Through community service, cultural exchanges and a wide-ranging series of residential trips, expeditions and educational visits, they learn how to stand in the shoes of others: how to appreciate beliefs and values that differ from their own.

In our extensive work experience programme, through internships, and with the benefit of advice from our high-powered network of business leaders, expert practitioners and professionals, they begin to develop a genuine understanding of the world that awaits them when their schooldays are over.

Founded just over 25 years ago and named Company of the Year at the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan's 2014 British Business Awards, BST offers an outstanding education to young people aged three to 18, who currently represent more than 50 nationalities.

To learn more, please contact our admissions team to arrange a visit: admissions@bst.ac.jp 🇬🇧

WILL RUGBY UNION CONVERT THE MASSES?

Plans to make sport popular in Japan

BY DAVID HULMES

It is to be hoped Koji Tokumasu likes a challenge because, by his own admission, he has plenty to tackle over the next few years.

The general manager of Japan Rugby 2019 has identified five goals to aim at in delivering the Rugby World Cup (RWC) 2019, not least of which is how to make Japan love rugby union. That will be no penalty kick from under the posts, and Tokumasu sees many phases of play on the road to winning that popularity contest.

The first of those was the announcement of host cities on 2 March, which he hopes will kick-off the first wave of interest.

“Popularity is not great at the moment but, once we decide the 10 to 12 host cities, those cities will start to promote [the tournament]”, Tokumasu said at a British Chamber of Commerce in Japan luncheon. Titled “Rugby World Cup 2019—The Plan”, the event was held at the Grand Hyatt Tokyo on 3 February. “Next year”, Tokumasu added, “we would like to try to pick up another 10 to 12 base camp cities”.

“If we encourage only rugby fans to come to the games, we can never fill the stadiums. So we want to encourage non-rugby fans to come to the stadiums, for them to learn [about] rugby, for them to make friends. There are various ways we can get them involved—as volunteers, for instance”, he said.



Also at the luncheon was Japan Assistant Coach Steve Borthwick, who was England captain between 2008 and 2010. He highlighted the benefits of getting involved as he reminisced about the 2007 tournament in France.

“I remember being in Paris in the lead-up to the World Cup final and there were people from every single nation of the world, it seemed, in this city having the most fantastic time ... the World Cup brings pride for your country”, Borthwick said.

There are lots of other high-profile markers for Tokumasu before the first RWC whistle is blown in 2019.

Next year, Japan enters a Tokyo-based franchise in Super Rugby, the largest professional rugby union competition in the southern hemisphere. This marks Japan’s first major move on a bigger club stage. Towards the end of 2017, the draw will be made for RWC 2019. In the two years running

up to the big event, Tokumasu also hopes to attract the best international teams.

“What I can imagine is that England, South Africa and those top-tier teams will want to come to Japan to try out training, and for test events. So maybe in 2017 and 2018 we will invite those top-tier unions to Japan”.

All these high-end developments present promotional opportunities for Japan. Yet, Tokumasu has ambitious plans at junior levels, too, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

“There are a lot of experiments we have to try ... one is at the grassroots level. We have about 20,000 primary schools in Japan and we would like to make all of them play tag rugby”.

And to think, in these plans Tokumasu has only partly covered work towards just one of his goals: fostering a love of the game. He also has to

- Key is getting non-rugby fans to attend games, become involved
- Top teams expected to pull crowds
- Plans may impact positively on social issues

deliver collaboration with local governments, work with other countries in relation to tourism and business, and find the best way to work alongside the developments for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Games will follow in almost indecent haste, with the flame to be lit at the new national stadium just nine months after the RWC final in the same arena.

Finally, Tokumasu is under no illusion as to the scale of the fifth and, ultimately, most challenging goal: to achieve a legacy. RWC 2019 is about “what we can leave for local cities, what we can leave for young people, what we can leave for the country, what we can leave for Asia”, he said.

As Sophia University, among others, has expressed interest in using its campus as a promotional area, Tokumasu believes the opportunities for interactions with non-Japanese that the tournament will afford will make universities more globalised. Moreover, students may be inspired to study overseas.

He also pointed out that RWC 2019 could solve the social problem of a lack of communication and cooperation between the older generation and younger generation.

With so many sport- and society-related aims, Tokumasu will need to be on top of his game to get them over the line. 🍀

MYSTERIOUS MILLENNIALS

Welcome to the era of the free agent

BY DR GREG STORY

Japan is entering a scary world of work. The tried and true assimilation methods of the past that injected young talent into firms are starting to falter. Every generation feels a gap with its successor, but the size of the impending chasm in Japan is spawning fresh challenges.

Things started to unravel with the bankruptcy of Yamaichi Securities Co., Ltd. in 1997, which put loyal staff on the street. This was a postwar watershed in the company-staff contractual model widely held in Japan. Shocking at the time, it was followed by something much worse: the Lehman shock in 2008. The expectation of lifetime employment in return for total devotion was revealed to be a mirage.

Millennials—people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s—are the first generation to experience two major trends: a decline in the youth population and being fired when one's company "right sizes"—a modern euphemism for downsizing. The end of the old order has created skepticism among young people about the relevancy of their parents' experiences for their own employment.

Some 40% of youth today are *dai-ni shinsotsu* (secondary new graduates), who quit their first job after three or four years and head off to find another workplace more

Firms are well advised to retrain their leaders to deal with this hotly contested youth supply problem.

to their liking. Unthinkable in their parents' time, this Japanese version of "free agent" worker mentality is a big cost to firms that have invested in training these new entrants, only to see them soon vote with their feet and depart.

Until now, it has been poor pickings for graduates in Japan to find a full-time job. That era is drawing to a close. There are now half the number of 14- to 24-year-olds that there were 20 years ago. Colleges with two-year programmes are no longer as popular, as today's youth can more easily enter universities offering four-year courses. These Millennials have choices. You do not have to be a genius to see what is coming around the corner—the war for recruiting and retaining young people in the workplace is going to intensify.

A smaller pool of available hires and a newfound freedom to change employers—without any social stigma—is empowering this generation. Abenomics may be a conjurer's trick, but it is boosting share prices and improving profits for exporters. Many firms have now stockpiled cash to the point of making bankers wail and weep. In my own experience, over the last four years I've seen the number

of resumes for salespeople under 40 years of age drop significantly. Market demand for the young seems to be getting stronger and stronger.

The issue is going to be how to attract these Millennials to your firm and how to keep them happy so they stay. How good are your supervisors at molycoddling the young? Given that most of today's managers have worked like dogs and were raised on being yelled at by their bosses, the answer is probably not very promising. Middle management's approach is to hand out what they got, but this will not be a very successful training formula for these young individuals.

Thirty human-relations principles are outlined in the book *How To Win Friends and Influence People*, and they seem tailor-made for dealing with Millennials. Sage advice such as "Don't criticise, condemn or complain" will perfectly address delicate youth sensitivities. Communication skills will be a big issue for bosses dealing with the young, and the penalties for managers who fail to understand this will be severe. Remember, employees do not leave companies; they leave bosses. Whining, harping bosses

will be seeing new entrants rush for the door.

Firms are well advised to retrain their leaders to deal with this hotly contested youth supply problem. If they do not, they may be unable to engage and retain this generation of workers, which is vital to fulfilling firms' succession plans. Long-term planning is a Japanese forte, but it will all be lost if leaders mess it up and lose their successor generation. On-the-job training will not deliver anything worthwhile in this regard. Mediocre managers passing on a diluted version of what they learnt from their similarly mediocre seniors was always a dubious Japanese training construct. The juice has well and truly been squeezed from the Japanese on-the-job-training stone.

Organisations will also be more successful in recruiting and keeping Millennials if they have more relevant training to offer them. The same tired induction training courses or the functional rotation of positions throughout the firm are not satisfying this generation. They lack experience, so they want practical information rather than lectures or theory, as well as concrete skills to make them more successful. What is more, they want them now.

Prepare your organisation for this brave new world of Japanese Millennials, or brace yourself for the unfolding nightmare. ☠

STEVE BORTHWICK

Excitement and challenge for Japan team

BY KATHRYN WORTLEY
PHOTOS: ©JRFU 2014

With less than six months before Japan kicks off its first Rugby World Cup (RWC) 2015 match in Brighton, Sussex, Assistant Coach and former England Rugby Captain Steve Borthwick has told *BCCJACUMEN* he is confident the team will be ready. Having played for six years as a lock at Saracens Football Club under current Japan Head Coach Eddie Jones, the Cumbrian-born Borthwick speaks from experience.

“It’s a challenge [to create a side] when you’ve got people who mostly play for their company teams and then come together in the national team,” he said. “But Eddie is excellent at bringing the group together.

“The players work very hard and Eddie really is a fantastic head

coach so hopefully we can perform our best, put on a good show and have a good level of performance,” he added.

Borthwick is pleased with the so far and his place in it, while recognising that there is still much work to be done—as the aim is for the team to peak at the tournament.

“It’s a really exciting time for rugby in Japan but also for rugby generally, globally,” he said. “For the Japan side, going from 16th in the world to 9th since 2012, when Eddie became head coach, shows the progress the team has made.”

Borthwick began working sporadically with the Japan side as a spot coach in 2012, before taking up a permanent position coaching the forwards in 2014. Focusing on monitoring and assisting players in their training, Borthwick is working on the development of the team. He is keen to find different ways to enhance the learning process for players, and uses videos, notes, pictures and an interpreter to carry out previews, reviews and one-to-one meetings.

Aside from the forthcoming rugby world cups, Borthwick said there is much he is excited about. The national side punched above its weight to triumph at home over two Tier 1 teams—Wales in 2013 and Italy in 2014—and attendance at the 2014–2015 season has been the highest recorded in top league history. This, he points out, is before one considers the impact

- Japan is moving up in world ranking
- Players expected to peak at September World Cup
- Domestic, global changes set to raise profile of rugby in Japan



The Japan national side take part in a training session.

of the Tokyo Sevens tournament in April, the addition of rugby sevens into the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and Japan’s announcement that, commencing in 2016, it will have a team in the Super Rugby competition.

As this activity will raise the profile of rugby in Japan, Borthwick is glad the values he learned as a player are helping him with his coaching.

“Right up to the very last day before I retired as a player, I was always learning as a player and as a captain,” he said. “So I have the understanding that, as a coach, I will always be learning.”

He draws parallels between leadership in rugby and business.

“As a captain, I tried to understand personalities and put

the systems in place to ensure you get the best out of people,” he said. “That means knowing people and having clarity of purpose: it’s the same in a business environment.”

By instilling these skills, among others, he believes rugby is a sport with a lot to offer, particularly to children.

“It teaches life lessons: dealing with adversity and pressure; understanding teamwork and hard work; the need for mental, physical and moral courage; respect for people; and an understanding of competition,” he said.

With plans for tag rugby classes at schools to help bolster interest in RWC 2019, the opportunity for children to try it might come sooner than had been expected. 🇯🇵



Japan Assistant Coach Steve Borthwick



Lord Deighton KBE addressed BCCJ members and guests. • PHOTO: ANTONY TRAN

- Key meetings held with Tokyo 2020 president and his team
- Need relationship-building, fact-finding and optimism
- Knowhow is shared; traits of Games are personal to host city

Legacy, diversity and leadership: these are the buzzwords of Lord Deighton KBE, former chief executive of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG). Sharing the lessons learned in delivering the London 2012 Games, he gave an inspiring presentation at the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan’s breakfast event on 17 February at the Shangri-La Hotel, Tokyo.

Lord Deighton was then joined by British Ambassador to Japan Tim Hitchens CMG LVO on a courtesy visit to his Japanese counterpart, Yoshiro Mori, at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government offices. Mori, president of the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (TOCOG), engaged them in an exchange of views behind closed doors (page 43). Thereafter, the pair also met in private with other members of TOCOG.

Lord Deighton’s day began with him reminiscing on a childhood memory of the Tokyo Olympiad in 1964—one of the reasons that led him to accept his former role at LOCOG.

“For me, Tokyo and the Olympics are quite special because 1964 is the first Olympic Games that I can remember. I was a small boy—an eight-year-old—but I can remember very clearly the Ethiopian runner Abebe Bikila winning the marathon,” he said. “The memories you create as part of the Games are an absolutely critical part of it”.

This issue of legacy, he said, is a key consideration in the planning process. In addition, in delivering London 2012, he was mindful of the need for quality leadership as an important ingredient for success.

“One of the most difficult things”, he said, “was to get my leadership team right, because you’ve got to have someone who can take the organisation from being a small start-up to what will become the biggest organisation in the country”.

Being a successful leader, Lord Deighton continued, requires an ability to build relationships with key stakeholders, including sponsors and the wider community. What is more, a keen understanding of operational challenges and requirements is needed.

To this end, Lord Deighton met and interviewed as many of the previous chief executives of the Games’ organising committees as he could. Rather disconcertingly, he discovered that more people had held the role than the number of Olympic and Paralympic Games, suggesting the job is far from easy.

What he learnt from these leaders, however, is that the run-up to staging the Games is a journey. He summed it up in seven stages: initial exhilaration; the settling in of reality; disillusionment; doubt; the hunt for scapegoats; success; and glory for all involved.

The seven stages are ultimately summed up in the “how” and “why” of successful project management. The how has three variables: time (fixed in the case of

London’s 2012 legacy and Tokyo’s Olympian task

—Lord Deighton

BY JOHN AMARI



Lord Deighton met hammer thrower Koji Murofushi, who took bronze at London 2012. PHOTO: TOKYO 2020 RYO ICHIKAWA

the Games), money (variable, but clear and precise budgeting is), and functionality or delivery (even greater variability).

One aspect of delivery in the case of London 2012, Lord Deighton continued, was to ensure the Games accurately reflected society by showing diversity. To achieve this, he sought to recruit underrepresented groups, including women, minorities and those with disabilities.

Considering the “why” of the Games, he said the reasoning behind London 2012 was to inspire young people to take up sport—a goal reflected in LOCOG’s initial promise when bidding for the Games.

Lord Deighton and his team were also determined to realise an attitudinal shift in society through the mega tournament. This was achieved in several ways, such as inspiring national pride via the Olympic Torch relay. This initiative



A question and answer session followed Lord Deighton’s presentation. • PHOTO: ANTONY TRAN

drew enthusiastic local support while showcasing some of the best of the UK’s rural and urban areas.

In closing, Lord Deighton drew on his experiences to share sage advice relevant for those involved in Tokyo 2020.

“What I learned about leadership was to be ever the optimist and to show people what they can do no matter how tough the challenges and how impossible it might seem”.

A robust question and answer session followed his presentation, covering topics such as security surrounding the Games, comparisons between the use of large and small corporate sponsors, and the effect of social media on broadcasting.

When asked if he had any regrets, Lord Deighton said he wished he had followed his instincts earlier in the decision-making process.

He added that, while every Games is particular, and tailored, to the host city, there are some areas where knowhow can be transferred, making him confident that Tokyo can take away any necessary lessons from LOCOG’s experience and put on a great show.

“I know that Tokyo 2020—the 32nd Olympiad—is going to be absolutely fantastic”, he concluded. 🇯🇵

“The finest clothing made is a person’s skin, but, of course, society demands something more than this”. — Mark Twain

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TOHOKU: Broken hearts and humbled

Football film shines light
on human recovery

BY JULIAN RYALL



When Doug Hurcombe and Geoff Trodd set out to make a documentary about the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami through the prism of professional football club Vegalta Sendai, they anticipated a fairytale story of a small town team overcoming great adversity to succeed. They got a great deal more.

One of the co-directors of GPO Films, Hurcombe told *BCCJ ACUMEN* that he was in Britain when the disaster occurred, and “watched in stunned silence as the pictures unfolded on the news”.

His wife Kaoru phoned loved ones in Japan to confirm they were safe, but could not contact friends in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, as communication links had been destroyed.

It took more than one week to contact their friends there, and Hurcombe admits that, at one point, they had feared the worst. However, not only were the friends alive, but they insisted on going ahead with plans they had made to take a holiday in Britain.

As big fans of Vegalta Sendai, they wanted to watch a football match in the UK during their stay. Hurcombe got them tickets to a game between Ipswich Town and Middlesbrough.

Unbeknownst to Hurcombe and his Japanese friends, an Ipswich supporter had contacted the club and informed officials that survivors of the 2011 disaster would be in the crowd that evening.

In tribute, the club played “Take Me Home, Country Roads”—the Sendai club’s fan group song—during half-time and took a collection.

“This effectively left our friends as surprise ‘guests of honour’ that night: something that absolutely knocked them out”, Hurcombe said. “There wasn’t a dry eye in the house as the full effect of the last couple of weeks really sunk in with them, and they felt this wave of support from football fans half-way across the globe.

“It made me think about the global brotherhood of football fans and wonder how the message of Vegalta had made its way across the world so quickly”.

Hurcombe began to follow the Japanese team’s progress up the J-League. Their success included an impressive debut season that saw them qualify for the AFC Champions League and cement their reputation as one of the top teams in the country. What is more, he found the support of their fans was nothing short of remarkable.

“As we’ve got more involved in the story however, we’ve realised how much deeper it goes: how much the hope the club has offered has meant to the people there, and how hard the fans have worked to help their community”, he said. “This is so much more than a film about football now; it’s a film about determined, brave people and the battle they have faced to rebuild their lives”.

After raising funds to create the film, titled “Football, Take Me Home”, Hurcombe and the camera team arrived in Sendai in the summer of 2012 to start filming. Even 18 months after the tragedy, he said that seeing the disaster zone for the first time left an “indelible impression”.



Residents watch the effect of the tsunami on 11 March, 2011. • ©CITY OF SENDAI



Local teams take part in search and rescue operations. • ©CITY OF SENDAI



J-League team Vegalta Sendai was the prism through which UK film makers showed the aftermath of the East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. • ©VEGALTA SENDAI

“The sheer scale was absolutely horrific and something you could never adequately visualise or explain to people”, he said.

With the help of local volunteers and the blessing of the football club, Hurcombe set about making the movie.

“The fans, though, were the real revelation”, he said. “They were wary of the media as they had received some bad press in the past and hadn’t allowed any filming from within their ranks”.

However, after a couple of trips, the film-makers were invited to a get-together, and informed, after great discussion, that the fans had decided to allow them access and would support them in anything they wanted to do.

“The actuality was they went way beyond anything we could have hoped for and were pivotal in the making of the film”, Hurcombe said.

“Their level of support for the community and understanding of the nature of the struggles of the region transcended just about anything I have ever seen—certainly in terms of sport.

“And it was incredible to watch them in action: raising money, supporting football in the community and helping with youth projects”, he added. “That was aside from watching them in the stadium, which was an experience—as a football fan—I’ll never forget”.

While admitting that “film-types can be notoriously self-centred and live in an indulged bubble”, Hurcombe is sure that the project changed everyone who was involved.

“Living with the people of the region and being treated with such generosity by people who have lost so much has been both humbling and heartbreaking”, he said. “The crew have worked tirelessly, pushing on and on beyond normal accepted endurance, as they believe in the story we are telling.

“We have all regarded it as a privilege to have seen what we have seen and to share the tears and happiness of a great people”, he added. “We only hope now to do it all justice on screen”.

The aim is to have the 90-minute film—not by coincidence running the same length as

a football match—completed in the next few months, which will be followed by a series of screenings. It will then be entered in film festivals, such as the Toronto, Berlin, Sundance and Tokyo festivals, before going out on limited release and, eventually, onto television.

Asked the best part of the entire process, Hurcombe does not hesitate: “Seeing just how high the high points are for people that have suffered so much.

“They celebrate even the smallest victory with a joy and vivacity we’ve lost in our jaded consumer world”, he said. “From a victory in a football match to a woman in temporary housing finding long-lost wedding photographs that have been recovered from the ruins and cleaned by volunteers, the joy was the same: tinged with slight sadness, but full of optimism.

“These really are among some of the most beautiful people on earth.” 🌸

www.footballtakemehome.com



The Tohoku Rokkonsai Festival is held to lift the spirits of local people. • ©CITY OF SENDAI



A project to restore a seaside forest washed away by the tsunami • ©CITY OF SENDAI

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Emerging from a recession

BY TREVOR WEBSTER
DEVERE GROUP

Is Abenomics on the right track? Can Japan dispel the doom of deflation and finally raise the country out of its missed decades? The jury may be out, but there is a lot of positivity in and around the country's major cities.

The three arrows of fiscal stimulus, monetary easing and structural reform have been received with some false dawns and varying degrees of skepticism. However, recently Japan officially left the recession.

Due to higher exports, the economy was growing at an annualised rate of 2.2% in the final quarter of 2014. Toyota Motor Corporation declared its highest earnings to date: a net profit of ¥1.73trn, which is a 13.2% year-on-year increase. So, what can we expect in 2015 and beyond?

With Japan's outstanding general government debt now twice the size of its GDP—a ratio currently the highest among major industrial countries—the country raises concerns in global economic circles. That said, with the determined position adopted by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Haruhiko Kuroda, governor of the Bank of Japan (BoJ), some are less pessimistic than others.

For instance, the recent announcement that the Japanese pension fund would more than double its allocation to domestic equities is likely to be very positive

The Japanese corporate sector does offer an attractive investment opportunity over the medium to long term.

for the Japanese stock market. At the time of writing, the Nikkei 225 is closing in on a 15-year high, having risen 108% since Abe was elected in 2012.

The delay in a further increase in the consumption tax rate was a good economic and political decision. While providing more time for the experiment to work, it does not cut off momentum at its knees, allowing the equity market bull run to continue.

Structural reform is probably the most contentious arrow of the three. There is no doubt this is a complex issue with many moving parts. None of these are instant game changers, for it is the sum of the changes that will create the improvements so desperately required.

A weakening yen and the return of positive inflation, coupled with increased consumer spending from wage-price inflation—which has yet to be seen—should support the demand for equity securities. With the fall of the yen, imported inflation, export competitiveness and the repatriation of foreign earnings, Japan scores as one of the cheapest markets globally. The 2015 forecast from the BoJ is for

strong earnings growth at a rate of 8% to 10%.

There are obvious signs of a work in progress. Labour mobility still needs to be improved and the participation of women in the workforce needs to be increased. This is very apparent—perhaps particularly in foreign circles—given that the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games is but a short time away.

In addition, corporate tax rates are high, and Japanese corporations, while having a lot of cash on their balance sheets, show no signs of distributing it via dividend payments. What is more, many firms continue to keep people employed in unproductive capacities, which is clearly not in the interests of a sound economic plan.

The obvious risks for Japan are that the inflation target is not met and consumption grinds to a halt. Demand would fall, supply increase, and prices come down.

There is also the risk of there being an earthquake similar to, or of greater intensity than, the Great East Japan Earthquake on 11 March, 2011. This would probably result in a significant decrease in the

value of the equity market but, depending on the severity of such an event, it might be followed by a swift rebound. While it might appear insensitive, buying on the dip is obviously the time to do so. As with any investment, you make money on the price for which you buy the asset, not on that for which you sell it.

It is worth noting that Japanese households hold 53% of their assets in cash compared to 15% in the US. The desired shift of 1% from household financial assets to domestic equities over the next five years would add ¥18trn in new funds to equities. Until such time as this objective is achieved, the BoJ has committed to a bond-buying programme.

Nobody can say with any certainty what the outcome might be, but the Japanese corporate sector does offer an attractive investment opportunity over the medium to long term. 🌸

The information contained in this article is believed to be reliable, but is subject to change without notice. It provides an opinion, based on facts and experience, and is not to be construed as investment advice. deVere Group makes no representation as to the completeness or accuracy of the information or of any opinions expressed.

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CREATING A WIN-WIN RELATIONSHIP



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Client satisfaction is the key to success

BY MARTIN FOSTER

Personal convictions about client satisfaction, along with an ability to anticipate both a changing business model and the increased globalisation of Japan, have put Shoji Imoto in the driving seat when it comes to helping expats with life-planning needs.

Imoto is chief executive of Financial Design, Inc., a firm that, with offices in Tokyo and Oita Prefecture, is entering its seventh year of operations.

As an insurance agent with an emphasis on wealth management issues, the firm has so far dealt only with Japanese clients. However,

according to Imoto, the business is now looking to offer services to people of all nationalities living in Japan. He believes his knowhow in the area of pensions and inheritance, in particular, can be of help to couples in which one partner is Japanese and the other an expat.

Becoming a lifelong partner with the client comes first.

“We can help expat clients with issues such as life insurance, pensions, and with the Japanese tax system while they are in Japan,” he said. “Also, for people with Japanese spouses who accompany them when they leave the country permanently, we can explain important points for Japanese residing overseas, based on the Japanese tax system”.

With 90% of Japanese adults holding some type of life insurance contract, policies tend to emerge as part of a solution to wealth management or life-planning challenges. In this area, one of Imoto’s specialities is the expertise he has nurtured in clarifying risk.



Financial Design is a financial planning business that anticipates all risks likely to emerge over the lifetime of a client.



Shoji Imoto is chief executive of Financial Design, Inc.

A registered financial planner, he believes a major part of his job is to make the client aware of risk, especially in the specialist areas of tax and inheritance strategies, along with life-planning.

“I see our work as taking the latent risks that our clients are not yet aware of, and helping to visualise this risk by bringing it into the open,” he said.

Depth and breadth of experience

Imoto began developing his skills at Mizuho Bank, Ltd.—ranked 17th in the world in the Bankers Almanac in November 2014—where he worked for 14 years in the loan operations and financial planning area.

However, not satisfied with the client service provided by a banking organisation, which tends to include job rotations every two or three years, Imoto moved to Alico Japan.

“While offering clients a plan that takes in their whole lives I felt that if I was going to be rotated to a new job or location every three years, then that would leave things half done,” he said. “But with life insurance, I said to myself, ‘here is a job that I can continue on the client’s behalf for my entire life.’ That is why I moved to become a life insurer”.

Imoto spent five years at Alico—the US-based insurer currently known as MetLife Insurance K.K.—working mainly as a consultant on inheritance matters for high-net-worth individuals.

Imoto did well at the firm, winning the rookie’s contest, the Top Club Most Valuable Player award three times, and the VIP prize, before being ranked in the worldwide contest in 2007.

But, after five years, he realised that if he truly wished to focus on the client, then it was necessary to expand his own business scope. He consequently chose to follow the path to

independence in 2009, when he established Financial Design.

Imoto is currently attempting to create links with private banks and other investment organisations overseas to gather information so he is able to offer more multi-dimensional inheritance plans to clients.

“Without a global standpoint, our advice would also end up being too one-sided”, he said. “We are now attempting to further expand our overseas connections”.

Reading the industry

Gifted with the ability to anticipate events in Japan, Imoto’s decision to become independent broadly coincided with a shake-up in the life insurance industry.

A new set of laws governing life insurance practices that will strengthen accountability obligations vis-à-vis the client are set to be enacted from 2016. Further ahead, other potential measures might include details concerning disclosure of commissions that agents earn on policy sales.

Such a system, which has already been introduced in the UK, has led to about 40% of insurance sales staff leaving the industry due to their inability to comply with the more severe regulations.

“I believe a similar state of affairs may also arise in Japan, but it will have no bearing on our business at Financial Design”, Imoto said.

That is because, he explained, the firm focuses on consulting rather than sales. In fact, insurance sales are not the major objective of his business, and he believes becoming a lifelong partner with the client comes first.

Imoto’s work begins by making latent risks tangible for the client. In doing so, he helps them understand the nature of the risks they face. He will then consider the issues with

the client, before taking necessary measures to resolve them. These include selecting the appropriate specialists, such as lawyers or accountants, to help the client achieve their purposes.

Although operating as a life insurance agent, Imoto stresses that life insurance is just one possible solution to clients’ problems.

As the name suggests, Financial Design is a financial planning business that anticipates all risks likely to emerge over the lifetime of a client—in a more comprehensive manner than other similar firms. Staff then draw up the necessary solutions.

Imoto believes that while the work of the financial planner has yet to be fully recognised in Japan, the importance of the role will increase against the backdrop of the decreasing birth rate, the greying of the Japanese population, and increased globalisation. As a result, he is looking to increase the number of high-level financial planners at Financial Design.

“Our brand strategy is to improve service, not just to expand staff numbers”, he said.

Imoto’s trust-based approach to business has been developed over 20 years in the financial sector, and he intends to continue focusing on the interests of his clients.

“What I always tell my staff is that it is important not to focus on what they can make themselves, but on what we can provide for the client”, he said. “If we can please the client, then that helps to develop a trust-based relationship, thus creating a win-win situation”.

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Given the current scale and speed of change in the world, Aoba-Japan International School (A-JIS) knows that preparing young people to take their first steps into adulthood as global citizens is no easy task. Yet, it is one that the school is embracing—and passionate about getting right.

“This is a very exciting time for us,” said Ken Sell, head of school. “I think the kids enjoy the facilities that we have been building here and the learning that they are doing.

“The staff are very much on board, too, for what this will create for them: opportunities to learn and participate in something really important,” he added.

Sell refers to the dramatic changes underway at A-JIS. Initially formed in 1976 to provide children—primarily Japanese—with a foundation in English before enrolling in elementary school, the popularity of the programme resulted in demand for a similar

kind of primary and secondary education. Now, A-JIS provides an international education for students from a wide range of backgrounds, from K2 to grade 12 in Hikarigaoka, Nerima Ward.

“We provide an opportunity for both international students to understand the Japanese culture and context, and for the Japanese to be able to look outwards: to give them all a good grounding in understanding different cultures,” Sell said.

“We are aiming to develop students who truly have an international disposition: that sense that they understand and have experienced other cultures; that they can see beyond the differences of cultures and actually understand the similarities,” he added. “That will enable them to either make changes in the world or to lead change”.

Sell believes that A-JIS’s choice of the International Baccalaureate will enable students to use knowledge meaningfully.

“The IB curriculum expects kids to take action with what they have learned. We have to provide kids with opportunities to do that, from the time they start school to the time they finish it,” he said.

One such opportunity will come from the school’s focus on teaching entrepreneurial skills. It is hoped that, through this approach, students can challenge themselves, make mistakes and learn from them, thus increasing their capacity for lifetime empowerment: learning as a means of emancipation and the building of social cohesion.

“Entrepreneurism is a very social activity,” he said. “It is steeped in the idea of learning from others, being confident in yourself to test new ideas, to innovate and to look for opportunities, so it is a very outward-looking approach.

While teaching content is clearly important, Sell pointed out that the school also aims to instil in students the ability to tackle the unknown, as opposed to a sole focus on competency to do what they know well.

“Kids can create new concepts for different contexts, so that gives them a critical set of skills which enables them to go into unfamiliar contexts with self-belief,” he said. “On graduation, they will be able to participate in virtually any area in which they feel confident doing so”.

Recognising that effective learning also takes place outside the classroom, A-JIS is building partnerships and relationships with other schools around the world for student exchanges. In the hope of demonstrating internationalisation through experience rather than theory alone, the school aims, in the future, to provide all middle school students with an opportunity to spend a total of one year on four different continents.

As an institution encompassing a wide age range, A-JIS is also conscious of responding to children’s needs according to their stage of development. This work is important, explained Sell, not only to engage them and inspire them to be life-long learners, but also to create stability and a strong community within the school.

In recent years, the school has improved perimeter security, renovated paths, rebuilt science labs and installed a campus-wide wireless Internet system. There have been a number of recent additions including new artificial turf on the soccer pitch, outdoor basketball courts, a gymnasium and a playground. There are also plans to create a blended learning plaza featuring interactive screens for shared learning with students in locations around the world. 🌍

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Personal impact of soft power

BY SHARLEEN ESTAMPADOR HUGHSON

The first time I came to Japan was with my parents when I was two years old. They were in transit to the Philippines and had a one-night stopover in Tokyo. Later, they told me how impressed they had been by the cleanliness and the outwardly friendly demeanour of the Japanese people. I grew up mesmerised by *maiko* (apprentice geisha) dancing on the silk screens that my parents purchased during their short trip.

My parents, originally from the Philippines, went to Canada to work. I was born there, but we moved to the US when I was eight years old. Growing up in a bicultural environment had a positive effect on my career path, and I saw the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme as a golden opportunity in terms of my future.

My home in Japan was in Tsubata, a town in Ishikawa Prefecture, where I was placed as an assistant language teacher.

While team-teaching English at elementary and junior high schools, I learned how to work spontaneously and enthusiastically, especially when injecting some fun into the classes. The experience also gave me a wonderful insight into the school environment and how important it is for social development in Japanese culture and society.

Now in its 27th year, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme has welcomed over 55,000 people from 62 countries to deliver grassroots international exchange between Japan and other nations. Eighth in our series, this column features former JETs, both in the UK and Japan, who keep the idea of fostering mutual understanding firmly at heart.

I stayed for three years, after which I accepted an internship with the Embassy of Canada to Japan. Only available to those Canadians who had been on the JET Programme, this position gave me the opportunity to write a short paper on the possibilities of an Asian economic integration.

After living in Japan, I wanted to experience another country, and so the UK became my new home.

I read a Master of Science in international relations at the University of Aberdeen. My thesis supervisor introduced me to a theoretical approach to my research based on observing the everyday. This work led me to explore my current PhD thesis topic—“The JET Programme: Generating Soft Power through Memory and the Everyday”—at the University of Sheffield.

As part of my research, I spent 10 months in Tokyo looking into the lives of JET participants and how they promote an image of Japan abroad.

Taking a bottom-up approach, the study considers how memory and nostalgic attachment to a place and space can become the soft power through which an individual may promote the country abroad.

The concept of soft power, coined by Joseph S Nye Jr, of Harvard University, explains how attraction can be a tool that, while imprecise, can be powerfully effective in obtaining preferred long-term, foreign policy outcomes.

I have found, through my research, that time spent on the JET Programme leaves a lasting mark on participants, even those who say it has not.

When someone is at a distance from an experience and its spatial existence, memory is transformed and recollections feel more nostalgic.

In the case of a JET Programme participant who has left the country, suddenly hearing a conversation in Japanese on the street may result in them having the urge to approach the speakers. Likewise, going to a local sushi restaurant may result in memories of how much better the food was in Japan.

Not all the experiences one has gone through on the programme will necessarily have been sugar-coated, but the time spent in Japan is often filled with at least a few first-time, and sometimes perplexing, encounters.

Distinct from taking a holiday abroad, these experiences living and working in Japan will leave a transformative impression on one’s individual narrative. And despite being individuals, it is through the stories of our experiences that JET Programme participants reach people through face-to-face contact and social media, creating and dispersing to others images of Japan.

While continuing work on my PhD, I join Japan-related events in my spare time. I have now lived in the UK for more than five years, and it is here that I hope to continue my career in research. 🌸

JET Programme participants reach people through face-to-face contact and social media, creating and dispersing to others images of Japan.

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FEMALE MENTAL HEALTH



Why women are more at risk of problems

For four days (22–25 March), Tokyo is hosting the 6th World Conference on Women's Mental Health. Focusing on trauma, depression and resilience, the event is organised by the International Association for Women's Mental Health, a non-profit organisation established in 2001 to improve the mental health of women throughout the world.

While mental health problems have a profound impact on men and women, research shows some conditions affect them differently. On the whole, the toll of mental illness weighs more heavily on women.

Worldwide, depression is the most common mental illness. By 2020, it is expected to be the second-greatest cause of disability. In Japan—as in many developed countries—mental health problems continue to be on the rise. The Global Burden of Disease Study 2010, conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, reported that mental illness accounted for 7.6% of the global burden of disease, ranking as the fifth leading cause of disability and loss of life.

As a result of a 37% increase in the rate of disability between 1990 and 2010, the lifetime prevalence of depression is roughly double for women compared with that for men. Moreover, in 2010, the rate of healthy years lost as a result of depression was reported to be

Research indicates that mental health issues of mothers have a significant impact on social life as a whole, including child-rearing and the overall mental and physical health of families.

1.7 times higher in women than in men.

The study examined various factors contributing to women's mental health problems, particularly the role of sexual assault and intimate-partner violence in the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Rates of depression in women were found to be three to four times higher in those who were exposed to sexual trauma during childhood, and physical abuse or intimate-partner violence in adulthood.

Research shows that following rape, one in three women will develop PTSD. The high prevalence of sexual violence to which women are subjected, and the correspondingly high rate of PTSD experienced following such violence, renders women the largest single group affected by this disorder.

The report also found that women are vulnerable to mental health problems during pregnancy and the postnatal period. Studies suggest that one in 10 women will experience depression at some point during their pregnancy,

increasing to one in five during the first year after giving birth.

Moreover, research indicates that mental health issues of mothers have a significant impact on social life as a whole, including child-rearing and the overall mental and physical health of families. A study in the UK's Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths states that suicide, while rare, remains one of the leading causes of maternal death in the country.

Research has also found that work-life balance plays an important role in the mental health of men and women.

A 2011 cross-cultural study examined women's socioeconomic inequalities and their mental health in the UK, Finland and Japan. It found that Japanese women reported the greatest levels of conflict in their work-life balance and had the poorest mental health status.

Meanwhile, Finnish women reported the lowest conflict levels and best mental health. Key factors in this positive result were greater family-friendly work policies, good pay and job opportunities, as well as less gender stereotypes.

In the Global Gender Gap Report 2014, compiled by the World Economic Forum, Japan ranked 104th out of 142 countries. The report shows that gender inequality, lower wages and difficulty in obtaining full-time employment after giving birth affect Japanese women's work-life balance. Further, economic dependence resulting from these issues limits women's ability to divorce or escape an abusive relationship.

Mental health problems carry significant stigma worldwide. A 2013 study in this area by Shuntaro Ando, Sosei Yamaguchi, Yuta Aoki and Graham Thornicroft shows that greater levels of stigma were found in Japan compared with Taiwan and Australia. Japanese are more likely to believe recovery from mental illness is not possible, and that it is the result of personal weakness or character flaws rather than due to any biological cause.

If we are to improve women's mental health, equality in society—including the workplace—needs to be achieved and effective mental health treatment needs to be available. National campaigns addressing mental health issues and educational programmes at the community level are desperately required in Japan. The benefits would be felt not only by women, but also by their families and, ultimately, the country as a whole. 🇯🇵

ARTS

UK EVENTS IN JAPAN

COMPILED BY
KANA SHIMOYOSHI

1 UNTIL 5 APRIL

Thomas & Friends Original Artwork Exhibition

This special display will showcase the handwritten manuscripts of popular British children's TV series *Thomas & Friends*, written by Reverend Wilbert Awdry OBE. Original paintings by British illustrators Clarence Reginald Dalby and John T Kenney will also be exhibited.

PHOTO: REGINALD DALBY, "THOMAS AND BERTIE", 1949
©2015 GULLANE (THOMAS) LIMITED.

Hachioji Yume Art Museum

View Tower Hachioji 2F
8-1 Yokamachi
Hachioji-shi, Tokyo
10am-7pm (closed on Mondays)
Adults: ¥500
» www.yumebi.com
042-621-6777

◉ **Free tickets**

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

2 UNTIL 10 MAY

Parasophia: Kyoto International Festival of Contemporary Culture 2015

The first large-scale international exhibition of contemporary art to be held in Kyoto, this event will display the works of UK-born Simon Fujiwara and Susan Philipsz. Fujiwara won the Cartier Award at Frieze Art Fair 2010, while Philipsz was awarded the Turner Prize 2010. About 40 artists from

around the world will participate at several venues in the city.

ARTWORK: *The Distant Sound*, Susan Philipsz, 2014.

PHOTO: EOGHAN MCTIGUE ©SUSAN PHILIPSZ

Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (among other locations)

124 Okazaki
Enshoji-cho (inside Okazaki Park)
Sakyo-ku, Kyoto
Various schedules
Adults: ¥1,800
» www.parasophia.jp/en/
075-257-1453

3 5-19 APRIL

King Richard II

Written by William Shakespeare, this historical play will be performed by young Japanese actors. The director will be Yukio Ninagawa, who was awarded the title Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, as well as honorary doctorates from the University of Edinburgh and Plymouth University.

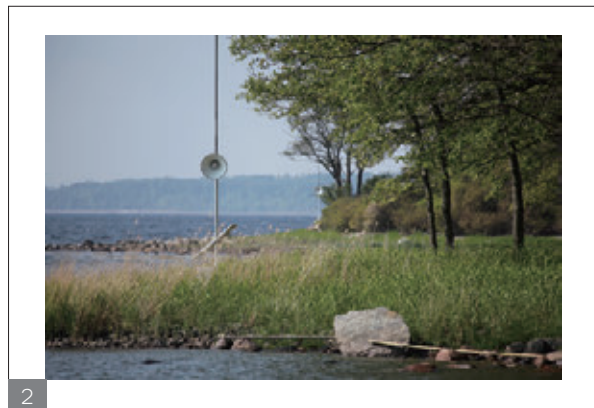
PHOTO: ©SHINJI HOSONO

Saitama Arts Theater

3-15-1 Uemine
Chuo-ku, Saitama-shi
Various show times
Adults: ¥4,000
» www.saf.or.jp/en/arthall/lineup2015.html
0570-064-939

◉ **Free tickets**

We are giving away two pairs of tickets to the 6:30pm show on 9 April.





4

◦ To apply for free tickets or gifts, please send an email with your name, address and telephone number by 31 March to: coordinator@custom-media.com. Winners will be picked at random.

**4
9-26 APRIL**

The Winslow Boy

This English play by Terence Rattigan is a story of justice and relationships, based on an actual incident. Set against the backdrop of middle-class society in London, the family of a young man tries to prove his innocence after he is expelled from the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich on a false charge. *The Winslow Boy* will be performed in Japanese.

New National Theatre, Tokyo

1-1-1 Honmachi
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo
Various show times
Adults: from ¥3,240
» www.nntt.jac.go.jp/english/productions/detail_005737.html
03-5352-9999

◦ **Free gift**

We are giving away five pamphlets for this event.

**5
11-19 APRIL**

Masaaki Shibata & Clive Bowen

This exhibition will display slipware, a traditional folk pottery technique whereby, before firing, slip is placed onto the clay surface by dipping, painting or splashing. Welsh-born Clive Bowen—who contemporised the tradition—and renowned modern slipware artist Masaaki Shibata will show their works and attend the gallery on 11 and 12 April.

ARTWORK: Clive Bowen's Shebbear Pottery
PHOTO: DREW RAITT

Gallery St. Ives

3-5-13 Fukasawa
Setagaya-ku, Tokyo
11am-6pm
Free admission
» www.gallery-st-ives.co.jp/e/top-e.html
03-3705-3050

**6
25-27 APRIL**

Swan Lake

One of three major ballet troupes in the UK, the Birmingham Royal Ballet will visit Japan for two shows of this romantic, yet tragic, love story. The first performance will be choreographed by Sir Peter Wright CBE and conducted by Philip Ellis.
PHOTO: BILL COOPER

Tokyo Bunka Kaikan

Ueno Koen 5-45
Taito-ku, Tokyo
25 and 26 April, 2pm
27 April, 6:30pm
Adults: from ¥5,000
» www.nbs.or.jp/english/contents/schedule/birmingham-royal-ballet-swan-lake/english@nbs.or.jp



5



6



1



2



3



4



5

The royal visit to Japan on 26 February–1 March

PHOTOS: © BRITISH EMBASSY TOKYO/ALFIE GOODRICH

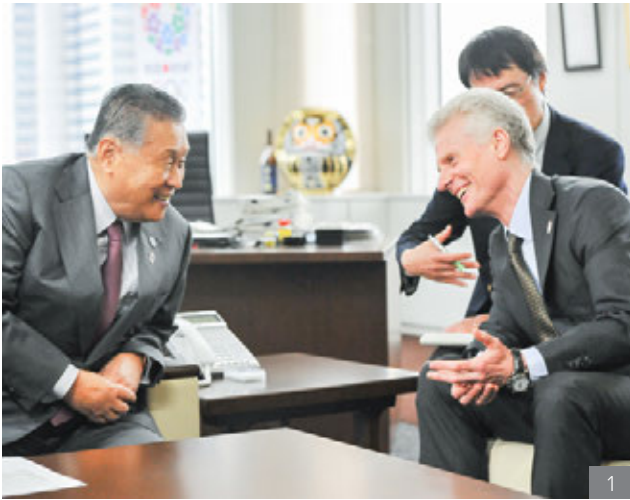
1 The Duke of Cambridge joined Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and local dignitaries for a traditional meal in Tokyo.

2 The duke watched a short film showing how NHK covered the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami at its broadcasting centre in Shibuya Ward.

3 The duke was transformed into a samurai warlord on his visit to the set of a NHK drama.

4 The duke played with children at Smile Kids Park in Fukushima Prefecture. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe also attended.

5 The duke met Hiroyuki Takeuchi, former chief reporter of *Ishinomaki Hibi Shimbun*—which published handwritten editions after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami and was supported by the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan's Back to Business initiative—in Miyagi Prefecture (see page 13).



UK-Japan events

1 | OLYMPICS

Yoshiro Mori, president of the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, met Lord Deighton KBE, former chief executive of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government offices on 17 February (see page 26).

PHOTO: TOKYO 2020 RYO ICHIKAWA

2 | TRADE

Transport Minister Baroness Kramer visited Tokyo on 29 January and viewed the Shinkansen training centre (see page 10).

3 | EDUCATION

Students of the British School in Tokyo performed at the institution's Advanced Musicians Recital, at l'atelier by APC, on 3 March.

4 | GOVERNMENT

Philip Hammond PC MP, foreign secretary, met Fumio Kishida, minister of foreign affairs of Japan, in London on 21 January.

5 | CULTURE

The junior group of the Japan-British Society held its annual Omochitsuki Party to pound rice cakes on 17 January.

PHOTO: TAKESHI OMATA

BATTLING AN ALLERGY TO JAPANESE CEDAR

Causes and treatments

BY DR TOM LOMAX

Residents of Tokyo can be seen commuting in surgical facemasks year round, with individual reasons for this practice varying according to the season. During spring, a number of people will be wearing masks in an attempt to mitigate the effects of pollen. Although hay fever is a global phenomenon, in Japan there are man-made factors at work that make it particularly severe.

In my medical practice, when I arrange for testing of patients with seasonal allergies, one of the most common results is a reaction to what is commonly known as Japanese cedar, or *sugi* (*cryptomeria japonica*). The timber of this tree was formerly a mainstay of the construction industry. It was planted widely after World War II, during the reconstruction of Japan.

However, between 1960 and 2000, the lower cost of imported timber undercut local suppliers' prices, causing the proportion of domestic timber used in construction to fall from over 85% to under 20%. As a result, many of the trees planted in the mid 20th century were allowed to grow past their intended harvest dates. This has led to areas of very dense *sugi*

monoculture, with older trees that produce much more pollen. At the same time, the domestic forestry industry has contracted to the point where it lacks the manpower to manage the beast it created.

Residents of urban areas often struggle with the advice that they are experiencing symptoms caused by *sugi* pollen as they may never see a single offending tree during the whole allergy season. However, tree pollen can travel great distances. When it finally falls to ground level in a city, it is likely to come into contact with a concrete surface. Unlike landing on a patch of earth, where the pollen will mostly be absorbed, it simply blows off this hard material, bouncing around until it comes into contact with a surface to which it can stick, such as clothing or the membranes lining the nose.

Although there are other pollens from grasses and broadleaf trees that can cause allergic symptoms later in the year, by far the most cases of allergy occur during the *sugi* season. Typically running from February to April, this period varies by location, starting earliest in the warmer west of Japan and latest in the colder north. Due to its impact, Japanese

news channels give pollen levels a lot of coverage.

The good news for recent arrivals to Japan is that, as with most allergies, a period of sensitisation is needed for a reaction to *sugi* to develop. It is very unusual to suffer from this allergy in one's first season here, but with each additional year, the risk of an allergic reaction rises. My experience of long-term, non-Japanese residents is that, after about a decade of living in Japan, they suffer the same rate of *sugi* pollen allergy as Japanese people, with about 20% being affected.

Other than face masks, there are a number of options available for limiting pollen exposure and of mitigating its effects.

Many British residents of Japan would make a local pharmacy their first stop in search of help in dealing with hay fever. However, on doing this they are often surprised to find that many popular non-sedating allergy treatments (antihistamines) sold over the counter in the UK are

- Concrete surfaces reflect pollen, exacerbating allergies
- Recent arrivals to Japan are unlikely to experience symptoms
- Many UK over-the-counter drugs require a prescription in Japan

only available with a doctor's prescription. Although older drugs can readily be purchased, they often make users very drowsy. This can result in many sufferers choosing to visit a local ear, nose and throat clinic in order to obtain antihistamines.

For those who do not want to take medication for the entire season of up to two months, air purifiers, sunglasses or even goggles and special clothing—designed to minimise the amount of pollen that is trapped—all may be of some help.

Yet, it is difficult to quantify the benefits. In medicine, a good general rule is that if there are many solutions to a particular problem, it is because no single one is effective enough to make all of the others redundant. 🇬🇧

There are man-made factors at work that make [hay fever] particularly severe.



BIGOTRY WRIT LARGE



Greater need for inclusion in the face of Olympics

BY IAN DE STAINS OBE

The question of whether or not Japan can ever embrace immigration on a large scale has long been a hot topic of discussion. Given the country's changing demographics—an ageing population, declining birth rate and a shrinking tax base—several experts have argued that allowing more qualified immigrants into the country (for example in the areas of software development and healthcare) is a sound policy. Even the nationalist-leaning Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has hinted that this might be a way forward and form part of his “third arrow” approach to restoring the country's economic wellbeing. So, it was with considerable dismay that I came across a recent column in the daily *Sankei Shimbun* proposing that Japan adopt nothing short of an apartheid approach to internationalisation.

The author, Ayako Sono, who reportedly (and worryingly) advised the government as a member of an education reform panel in 2013, wrote that she believes “whites, Asians and blacks should live separately”. She came to this conclusion, she announces unashamedly, after considering the situation in South Africa “20 or 30 years ago”. Where has this disgraceful woman—who was educated in a Catholic school—been living during the decades in which South Africa showed us Nelson Mandela's extraordinary ability to forgive the most appalling injustices? Why has her Catholic-school education not equipped her to understand the enormity of what segregation means (demonstrated not just in South Africa but in the US, too) and where, pray, is her Christian sense of moral right?

I find her conclusions and comments insulting at the most deeply personal level and I protest against them most strongly.



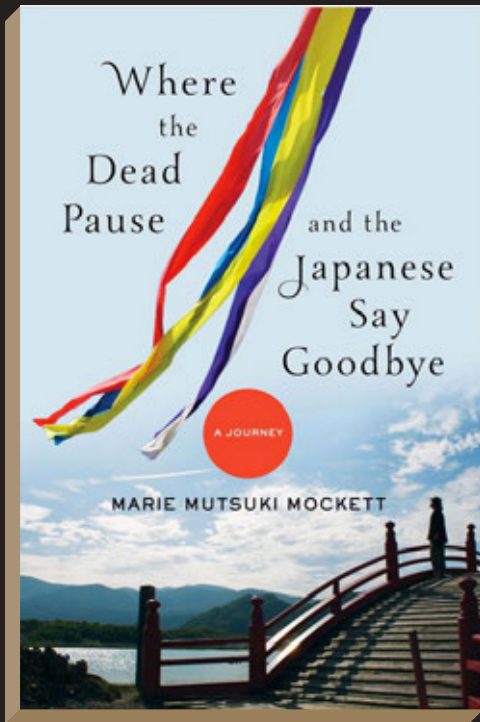
She would, of course—assuming that she had the time, courage or inclination to even consider my view—argue that I am a mere Caucasian foreigner who ought—in her jaundiced opinion—to be segregated to live in a “whites” only colony. What though, that my life partner is Japanese? But, I have lived in this country for almost 40 years. I pay my taxes; have done for all those years and, unlike many of the people Sono purports to “advise”, I do not cheat—and have never cheated—on those taxes. Nor have I had dealings with allegedly dubious organisations such as the Sasakawa Foundation, which Sono headed for some years.

On the other hand, I do celebrate the fact that in my life here in Tokyo I have friends of many races, faiths, skin colours and genders. I rejoice in it. When I read of the racial and religious discord that is blighting Europe and the US now, I feel so blessed: I know I can go out tomorrow and get a great hug from my African-American friends, share a meal with my Muslim friends and visit a Jewish community centre and know I will be warmly greeted. And all around

me, my Japanese neighbours greet me without hesitation, their children calling me “uncle”. This is what I consider to be inclusion in the community and surely this is what we all need as human beings.

I do not know (and, frankly, do not wish to know) Sono, so I cannot guess her motives for making such an outrageous and offensive proposal at this time, especially when Japan is debating the question of “hate speech”. But Japan is not the country it once was. It cannot afford to be seen as arrogant and exclusive. It is in the run up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Abe and his government need to sit up and take note: to recognise Sono's racist views—to give them any credibility at all or to even give them exposure—should risk the chance of having the Games taken away. What she espouses is entirely contrary to what the Olympian spirit embraces. The administration would do well to distance itself as quickly and as publicly as possible from her, and the Japanese media should at the very least question her distasteful opinions. 🇯🇵

BCCJ ACUMEN has one copy of this book to give away. To apply, please send an email by 31 March to: editor@custom-media.com. The winner will be picked at random.



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“Grief is not a one-way street in Japan”

Loss clouds promise of literary journey

The book under review is in search of itself. It is hard to say exactly why, but it fails to deliver on what it promises. The title is loaded with such promise that the reader is quite rightly drawn to it. Perhaps, being badged as “A Journey” is a clue as to why the book does not ultimately work. Most journeys have a goal, a purpose, a destination.

Yet, the author, Marie Mutsuki Mockett, appears to not have even the beginnings of a map—let alone a compass—to guide her writing beyond a vague connection with the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami of March 2011 and a somewhat anxious attempt to capitalise on it. I so wanted the book to work and there are some tantalising moments that suggest the author is capable of writing something with real impact. But, unfortunately, finding the core substance in this volume is like taking hold of some of the ghosts of which she writes, real or imagined. Hers is like a voice from an empty room.

US-based Mockett, whose family are the proprietors of a temple in Fukushima Prefecture, ostensibly sets out on a journey aimed at helping her cope with her grief at being unable to bury her grandfather’s remains, in addition to the sudden death of her father.

She appears unable to decide whether her book is a journal, a recounting of history or a cultural guide to Japan. It tries—too hard—to be each of these and thus unfortunately, but not surprisingly, succeeds in being none of them. At times it is both self-indulgent and patronising, leaving the reader wondering why a firmer editorial hand has not been at work.

To be fair, there are sequences that are engaging, as with the brief history of Buddhism in chapter six. Yet, even here the question has to be: for whom is the author writing? If one knows nothing at all about Buddhism and its introduction into Japan, it could be considered a reasonable interpretation. However, if the aim is to explain the influence it still has today, it is far too simplistic an attempt.

Meanwhile if the reader has some understanding of the complexities of how Buddhism was founded and developed in Japan, and how it fits in with the indigenous religion, Shintoism, it leaves many questions unanswered. In fact, so much so that it ultimately begs the question: why bother with it?

Mockett’s forays into Japanese history are equally questionable. Again, as a pocket guide to what happened and when, it is perhaps acceptable but no one looking for a serious explanation of the country’s extraordinary legacy will find it expounded here.

Perhaps I am being unfair. Mockett makes no claim to be writing a history; she writes with a great deal of honesty about personal topics. These include her own family’s history, her sense of grief and loss, as well as the hopes she has for her son. There may truly be a powerful book here, but in the making. The book’s publicists’ blurbs speak of “lyrical meditations” and “cultural insight”. I would argue that this does not yet describe the book.

I hope that Mockett revisits the subject when she has a little more distance from her pain and greater editorial support to guide her. 🇬🇧



Welcome to Japan Three ways of Living Eight lives in Tokyo



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Unilever Sustainable Living Plan Key targets by 2020

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