

The magazine of the  
British Chamber of  
Commerce in Japan

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BCCJ and Briton  
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## FOR UK CULTURE AND EDUCATION

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**Matthew Knowles**  
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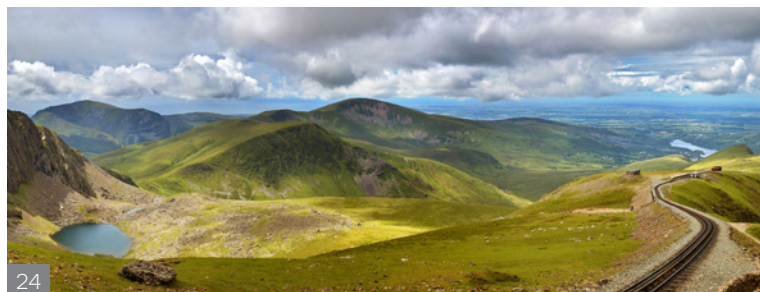
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The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan

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

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Music director of the Tokyo Sinfonia. (page 41)

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BCCJ members and writers are welcome to submit ideas for content, which will be reviewed by the publisher. [simon@custom-media.com](mailto:simon@custom-media.com)

# A global crisis and a green spring

BY PAUL MADDEN CMG  
BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

PHOTOS: © BRITISH EMBASSY TOKYO



The worldwide spread of Coronavirus has cast a long shadow over all our lives. As I write, many countries including the UK are in effective lockdown, with big impacts on global economic activity. A combination of travel bans by different countries, and massive reductions in airline schedules means that international travel is grinding to a halt. Many events, including the Emperor's State Visit and the Olympics & Paralympics have been postponed. People fear for the health and livelihood of loved ones.



## Clean Growth GREAT Week

February had begun reasonably normally in Japan. As part of our UK in JAPAN 2019–20 campaign, we held our Clean Growth GREAT Week from 17 to 28 February. There were a whole series of events—covering a variety of aspects of clean energy—which brought many hundreds of participants into the Embassy.

At the launch event, I was able to introduce both Alex Chisholm (left), the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and John Murton, the UK envoy to the United Nations COP26 climate change conference. They both spoke compellingly about the UK's commitment to decarbonising its economy and the need for others, including Japan, to increase the level of their ambition in time for the COP26 meeting in Glasgow in November. John made the same point in an interview on NHK.

Other individual events promoted Japanese energy investment in the UK and UK exports of offshore wind technology to Japan. We also hosted a seminar on nuclear decommissioning, which has been a big growth area for UK firms here since the Fukushima incident. A trade mission of UK energy firms visited Japan and took part in a seminar on improving access to energy in Africa, in which the Japan International Cooperation Agency and Japanese business also participated. We announced that Japan's Albatross Technology,

## Coronavirus hits Japan

The Coronavirus, which began in China, first hit Japan significantly in February. When the US-owned *Diamond Princess* cruise ship arrived in the Port of Yokohama, it appeared that a passenger who had previously left the ship in Hong Kong had reported positive for the coronavirus. Initially the medical consensus was that the best place to quarantine fellow passengers and crew was on the ship. But as the number of cases on board began to rise, eventually to more than 700, the United States, the UK and other countries decided to evacuate their citizens.

It was a very complex operation. Because of the high potential that the travellers might infect others, it was necessary to establish complicated arrangements to handle the disembarkation from the ship and transfer to the plane—as well as arranging for a quarantine site on arrival back in the UK. The Embassy went into 24-hour, three-shift working.

Meanwhile, our consular team were in regular touch with the 79 British passengers and crew. We worked to support those who tested positive, were hospitalised onshore and remained behind to recover after the evacuation.

There was much media coverage back in the UK, particularly of those passengers who assumed a high profile on social media. I had many Japanese people commenting on my Twitter account, including quite a few who criticised the BBC for referring to the “Japan cruise ship crisis” in a headline, which they interpreted as meaning a “Japanese ship,” whereas I think a native speaker would understand it as a “ship in Japan”. It was a salutary reminder of the complexity of working across cultures and languages.

Since then we have seen a massive increase in incidence of the disease all over the world. Governments in many countries have had to take very tough decisions to protect the health of their citizens and maintain the



which works on offshore floating wind energy, had won our Energy Tech Rocketship Award, giving them a free trip to the UK to identify opportunities to develop their business there. And the British Council launched a climate change essay contest for school students. Perhaps this will help find the Japanese Greta Thunberg?

The BEIS permanent secretary held annual industrial policy talks with his counterpart, Vice-Minister Shigehiro Tanaka of Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). Alex Chisholm also called on some significant Japanese investors with big operations in the UK.

During the same period, Foreign Office Political Director Richard Moore visited for a range of talks on foreign policy issues—from North Korea to Iran to Syria—with counterparts across the Japanese system.

### Visits to UK and West Japan

In early March, I was back in the UK for a series of meetings. I had calls at Buckingham Palace. The new Japanese Ambassador in London, Yasumasa Nagamine, kindly invited me round for lunch. He is settling in well in London and enjoying being back in the country once again.



I particularly enjoyed visiting the big *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* exhibition, which had just opened at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum, with Anna Jackson, who had curated it. It was a fascinating look at the huge impact the kimono has had on global fashion from the earliest days of Japan's contacts with the West.

I also visited Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd., the Japanese real estate giant, for a briefing on their property interests in the UK. Fresh on the heels of their highly successful redevelopment of the former BBC site in White City, West London, they are now working on the plans for a new British Library extension in the dynamic tech hub area around King's Cross Station, right next to the very impressive Francis Crick Institute for bio-medical research.

In March I visited Nagoya and Kyoto, meeting the Governors of Aichi and Kyoto prefectures, as well as investors, academics and media. We discussed coronavirus, local economic developments and opportunities in the UK.

Stay safe!

I gave the annual Ambassador's address to the Japan Society of the UK, hosted by Nomura International in the City, an opportunity to describe what has been happening in Japan over the previous 12 months. I was pleased to be able to report that UK-Japan relations were still going from strength to strength. Afterwards there was a lively Q&A chaired by the Society's president, Bill Emmott (formerly editor-in-chief of *The Economist*).



viability of their health systems. This includes unprecedented measures to restrict people's mobility, and major economic packages designed to reduce the impact on national economies. It has had a big impact on people's lives, but our citizens are acting responsibly in respecting the need for social distancing. At the Embassy we have cancelled or postponed many of our planned activities and most of our staff are working from home, assisted by technology in ways that would not have been possible until relatively recently.

Internationally, countries have introduced increasingly strict controls on movement of people across borders, at first extensive self quarantine procedures on arrival, then outright bans. This meant that airlines massively reduced their flight schedules. In March, the UK recommended against all non-essential overseas travel, and then recommended that Britons who lived in the UK but who were currently overseas on holiday or business trips

should return urgently to the UK because of the risk of getting stranded. This did not apply to Brits living permanently overseas. Meanwhile Japan removed the visa waiver for travellers from European countries including the UK, which effectively ended tourist visits.

All of this has led to uncertainty among expatriate communities overseas. But many Brits living in Japan have been here for a long time, have Japanese partners and know the local system well. They have lived through various natural disasters and respect the quality of the Japanese healthcare system.

The top priority for the British Embassy and our Consulate General in Osaka is the safety and welfare of British citizens. The situation will no doubt continue to evolve in Britain, Japan and internationally. Please follow local authority guidance including on personal hygiene measures. And continue to check our Foreign & Commonwealth Office travel advice on gov.uk. 🇬🇧



# Survival—not Silence—for the Sinfonia, Olympics ... and Thomas the Tank Engine

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

It takes a brave—or desperate—maestro such as Robert Rýker (page 41) to declare, in a mass email on 18 March: “Coronavirus will not silence us. The orchestra receives no government or foundation support, but relies for operational expenses almost entirely upon income from our performances. If we cannot perform, we cannot exist. We face a serious threat at this time. The Tokyo Sinfonia will keep playing. We owe it to our players, to our profession and to our precious audience. We do it for you. See you at the Sinfonia”.

Those of us who enjoy his sell-out British Serenade “marriage of menu and music” performed by the 19-piece string orchestra wish him and everyone the best in these difficult times. But I stress that we should all practice government instructions and common sense.



## Homes from Home

Talking about the show must go on, of the 15–20 events I had planned to attend since the coronavirus outbreak, only two survived: first was the local premiere of the latest Thomas the Tank Engine movie, *Thomas and Friends: Digs and Discoveries*, played to dozens of empty seats except where my five-year-old son and I were sat, despite the ruthless popcorn ban (“It makes a mess”).

Although the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games is now set for 2021, my other surviving event (page 44) was to showcase Team GB’s official hospitality house for the XXXII Olympiad (below). Considering the eclectic past venues of GB House, carefully chosen by the British Olympic Association, I was intrigued as the first Tokyo-based British journalist to visit 2020’s new innovative “mindfitness” and innovation venue in Aoyama.

Previous Games have also hosted our athletes at spectacular spots ranging from Rio 2016’s striking mansion built by a colourful industrialist—showcasing culture, music, business (and the Mayor of London)—set in rich botanical gardens under the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue, to London 2012’s convenient location with breathtaking views on the ninth floor of a shopping centre—with extensive space for media, VIPs and officials—next to the Olympic Stadium.

The Team GB House has traditionally been restricted to partners, VIPs, officials, athletes and their guests, but for Tokyo 2020 some fans will be allowed access—although details are not confirmed.

If you are lucky, wealthy or well-connected enough to visit GB House in Tokyo, you can expect something different: Made of quality natural materials—ideal for meditation—this quiet and

PHOTO: AOYAMA TREEHOUSE







The Rio 2016 British House

private second- and third-floor members' club, near New National Stadium, will broadcast to guests Team GB at track, field, opening and closing events. Along with VIP receptions, trendy cuisine and a state-of-the-art Aston Martin showroom below, the idea is to make athletes—when they're not training at Yokohama, Kawasaki or Keio University—feel at home with family and friends away from the heat, media, public and pressure. The British Embassy Tokyo is working with the Treehouse (home to GB House) to think British in its food and drink offerings ahead of the Games. The Embassy will also host some events at its UK House venue at the Ambassador's Residence during the Games as part of the UK in JAPAN 2019–20 campaign.

So how about our rivals? Some of the higher profile official houses in Tokyo belong to future Olympic hosts such as France, which aims for maximum exposure by proudly flying its tricolours for Paris 2024 next to Fuji TV. As Los Angeles looks to LA 2028, Tokyo American Club will welcome

hot favourites Team USA in a reputed \$4–5 million deal. Word is that some lucky members may win a very limited number of tickets to visit GB House, and vice versa.

The Instituto Cervantes—Madrid's answer to the British Council (page 22)—will become the “House of Spain.” The German House, meanwhile, is said to have booked all the sunbeds, towels and prime waterfront spots at the Aqua City Odaiba shopping mall. And Casa Italia—with Milan and Cortina at centre stage as hosts of the 2026 Winter Games—shows its priorities with a venue serving some of the finest Italian cuisine in Japan, the 100-year-old aristocratic Kihinkan-Takanawa Manor House. 🇯🇵

Dear Reader,  
Due to current market conditions, *ACUMEN* will be published on a bi-monthly basis until further notice. The next issue will be for May/June.

### VIRUS: WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER, SO LET'S SUPPORT EACH OTHER!

To help Japan's economy beat the Covid-19 outbreak (especially SMEs, freelancers, start-ups, entrepreneurs and independent firms), *ACUMEN* is offering free marketing, promotion and advertising—to all sectors and nationalities, BCCJ members and non-members alike—on our special new digital platform at Custom Media Online—called Connect (page 21).

Custom Media is offering this community service at absolutely no cost and to everyone—online and in our weekly newsletter—until further notice.

Why? Because we small operators—more than ever—need each other now to share our resources, support and goodwill with our community so we can all survive this horrible global crisis.

To qualify, if you or your company can offer visitors to Connect a special discount, gift, promotion, meal, drink, consultation, activity or other B2C or B2B deal, I'd be delighted to hear from you.

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# MEDIA

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## STRONG DEMAND FOR UK FOOD AND DRINK

Statistics reported by Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) show that the UK exported nearly £24bn worth of high-quality food and drink in 2019, up 4.9% over the previous year and 18% higher since 2016. Gov.uk said on 4 March

that the increase had been driven by demand from non-EU markets. Japan made particularly strong purchases of UK food and drink, valued at £311.5mn, marking a 14.1% year-on-year rise. Annual UK seafood exports grew to £16.6mn,

up 64.5% compared with 2018. British salmon also did well in Japan, as exports more than doubled to £13.3mn last year. The Scottish Salmon Company recently secured a deal to supply Genki Sushi Co., Ltd. with their Tartan Salmon brand.



Mitsubishi F-2 fighter jet

### UK LOSES OUT ON FIGHTER JET DEAL

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force has reportedly rejected the UK offer to build its next-generation fighter jet, choosing instead to partner with the United States.

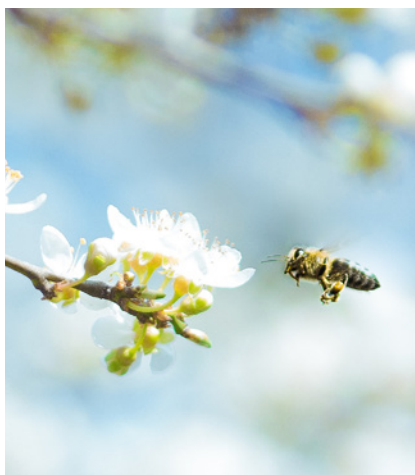
According to a 9 March article in *The Diplomat*, the UK proposal would have given Japan the freedom to update the jet’s design. Now, the US will lead design while Japan assumes the cost of research and development. Despite these reports, however, it is believed that the door is still open for UK involvement in the project.

### NATIONS TEAM UP FOR PENSIONS

Three global pension funds are taking a \$2tn stand in favour of sustainability investing. Online business journal *Karma Impact* reported on 13 March that Japan’s Government Pension Investment Fund (GPIF), the California State Teachers’ Retirement System (CalSTRS) and the UK’s USS Investment Management Ltd. say that they should be investing with sustainability and social impact in mind, as retirement funds are investments in the future.

The firms said they are not interested in investing in “companies that seek to maximise corporate revenue without considering their impacts on other stakeholders—including the environment, workers and communities”.





## NATIONAL TRUST OFFERS SAKURA AT NINE KEY SITES

Spring in Japan is famous for beautiful cherry blossom, but Covid-19 means that few Brits are likely to see these delicate pink wonders.

There's no need to travel, however, as nine National Trust sites boast *sakura*, allowing for viewing in the UK. The *Evening Standard* reported on 14 March that Hampshire, Warwickshire, Cumbria, Cornwall, West Sussex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Oxfordshire and Somerset all have the flowers on display.

## LONDON HEALTH AGENCY EXPANDS WITH TOP RESEARCH JOB IN TOKYO

London-based healthcare fieldwork agency Just Worldwide Ltd. has appointed Yuichi Ohta to the newly created research manager position in their Japan division.

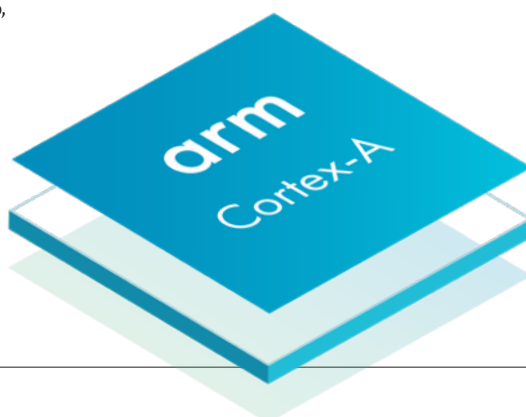
According to a 12 March article on market research website MrWeb, Ohta has more than 10 years of experience in Japanese healthcare

market research and knowledge of field management and moderation with healthcare professionals and patients. Managing Director Janusz Domagalski said, "Yuichi is perfectly placed so that his experience and skills will help international and local clients find solutions to issues currently faced in Japan's unique marketplace".

## SOFTBANK'S \$5BN SHARE BUYBACK

SoftBank Group Corp is buying back \$5bn worth of shares after their recent slump. According to a 13 March *Financial Times* story, the move is partly due to pressure from activist fund Elliott Management. SoftBank founder Masayoshi Son and Elliott Management both argue that SoftBank's \$72bn market capitalisation does not reflect the value of its investment portfolio, which includes majority stakes in UK chip designer Arm, and US telecoms group Sprint.

In a short statement released by Elliott Management, the activist fund said, "SoftBank's announcement of its intention to commence an initial buyback program of ¥500bn is clearly an important first step in addressing the company's significant undervaluation, and one that Elliott supports".



## NEWS BRIEFS

### MCLAREN AND BUZZ SIGN JAPAN GROWTH DEAL



PHOTO: MCLAREN

Formula One's McLaren Racing Team Limited have signed a multi-year partnership with Buzz & Co. Asset Management Limited to lead its growth in Japan. (*SportsPro Media*, 10 March)

### PARASITE SETS RECORDS

South Korean film *Parasite*, winner of this year's Oscar for Best Picture, has made box office history in Japan and the UK by becoming the highest-grossing film in both countries.

The film had a record-breaking opening day in the UK, earning £1.8mn in 137 theatres across the country. In Japan, the black comedy thriller grossed more than ¥4bn and has topped the box office four weeks in a row. (*The Korea Times*, 13 March)

“ £1.8mn in 137 theatres across the country ”

### ENGLAND BEAT JAPAN IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

After an opening loss to the United States, England beat Japan 1-0 in their second match as forward Ellen White scored late off the bench. The win in New Jersey keeps alive England's hopes of defending their SheBelieves Cup title. (BBC, 8 March)

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## Eventful start

Eight weeks on the job highlight the BCCJ's strengths

SARAH BACKLEY

**H**ow these weeks have flown by and evolved in a way that none could have foreseen. On 14 March, I marked two months since my move to Tokyo and introduction to the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) as associate director.

Some may say this was a baptism of fire, and although it was certainly not the kind of transition that I was expecting, the unprecedented challenge of Covid-19 has made one thing very clear: not only does the BCCJ provide an exciting platform for UK and Japanese business exchange, it is so much more. It is a proactive community full of trust and support—from the BCCJ team, Executive Committee (Excom) and BCCJ members—and, above all, is a group to which I am honoured to be a part.

### Leadership challenge

With the health and safety of our staff and members in mind—and in keeping with directives from

The BCCJ plans to host an array of information sessions in the form of webinars, podcasts and interactive Q&As.

the Government of Japan—Excom has made the decision to postpone all face-to-face events. We will continue to monitor developments surrounding Covid-19 and look forward to delivering our temporarily postponed events as soon as circumstances allow. These include New Horizons with Confederation of British Industry Deputy Director-General Josh Hardie, as well as our annual International Women's Day reception.

In the meantime, we welcome you to take part in our upcoming digital events and initiatives. Starting with a teleconference with BCCJ Platinum members in early March to understand the priorities and challenges faced in the leadership role in dealing with Covid-19 in Japan, the BCCJ plans to host an array of information sessions in the form of webinars, podcasts and interactive Q&As. The first webinar was held on 16 March and featured Jonathan Spraggs, vice president and international head of tech at GlaxoSmithKline, and Jeremy Sampson, managing director of Japan & Korea at Robert Walters. The pair discussed with moderator Heather McLeish, of EY Japan, the priorities and challenges in dealing with Covid-19 in Japan from a leadership position (page 18).

And on 27 February, we were delighted to partner with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to gain insights from their most recent global property

data survey and the latest intel on property markets in Japan and around the globe.

### Your voice matters

As many of you are aware, a large part of what makes these events possible and ensures the chamber's good governance is Excom. This year's deadline for nominations to serve for the 2020–2021 term is 27 March. Then, beginning on 3 April, all members will be asked to vote anonymously—by online poll, post or proxy—in advance of our Annual General Meeting on 27 April. I strongly encourage you to nominate, vote and attend!

### Your work honoured

To end on a high, despite the cloud of uncertainty that surrounds us today, there is a silver lining: the BCCJ was recognised earlier this month as International Chamber of the Year at the 2019 APAC Chamber of Commerce Awards (page 29). We were specifically singled out for our contributions to members and the furtherance of UK–Japan relations. The ever-growing achievements of the BCCJ are hugely inspiring and continue to set the bar incredibly high. Whatever else the coming fiscal year throws at us, I am excited to see what is in store for the BCCJ as we hold on tight and leap even higher! 🇬🇧

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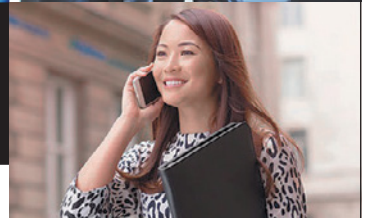


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## Plan and adapt for trying times

DAVID BICKLE | @BCCJ\_President

**P**art of the role of a leader is to bring clarity where there is confusion. For many years, I thought that meant that any leader worth their salt should have a plan. Not just any plan, but the plan—perfectly formed from conception and providing all the answers. Time and experience, however, have long since disabused me of that idea. Perfect plans are a nice, but somewhat naïve, aspiration. This is particularly true in the face of real-world uncertainty, where reality has a habit of throwing up the unexpected when, let's face it, you least expect it.

### Leadership

As we are all aware, the plans that we eventually adopt are often the product of multiple iterations and refinements. So, to think that one individual on their own can dream up the perfect plan shows blindness to the power of the team of which they

are a part. Far better, I think, is that leaders bring clarity of purpose and a clear goal. With that goal, or at least a well-established direction of travel, a high-performing team can begin to effectively use its collective talents in the struggle to figure out what their plan should be.

And, so it is at the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ). Like all organisations—sadly now throughout the world—we have spent much time deciding how best to respond to the unprecedented challenge of Covid-19. As we watch successive news bulletins, it is important to remember that the numbers affected are not mere statistics. There is a human story behind every case. We must also be mindful of the need to maintain perspective. In doing so, each of us has an obligation to make sensible and proportionate changes to our routines that will enable us to move forward with our daily lives in line with our purpose.

I am certain that it will not change the BCCJ's purpose—that our members make great connections with people who matter.

### Adapt

The BCCJ Executive Committee's immediate goal in responding to the current situation is to preserve the wellbeing of BCCJ personnel, chamber members and the community of which we are a part. Accordingly, we decided at the end of February to postpone face-to-face BCCJ events for two weeks. We continue to synthesise information from trusted sources on a daily basis, and by the time you read this issue of *BCCJ ACUMEN* you will know whether circumstances have caused us to extend this moratorium.

Although there is much we do not know about Covid-19, I am certain that it will not change the BCCJ's purpose—that our members make great connections with people who matter. While the chamber continues, therefore, to be responsive to official guidance, we are in parallel exploring alternative ways in which we can responsibly engage with—and continue to serve—our members and stakeholders. For a while, this may involve a shift to online formats, which in itself offers great potential to reach and engage with a wider audience of members. I, for one though, will be looking forward to a bonanza of in-person events as soon as circumstances allow. 🇬🇧



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# OUTDOORS EDUCATION

BST students build lifelong skills in rural Japan



The British School in Tokyo (BST), in keeping with their philosophy that education should extend well beyond the four walls of the classroom, includes as part of their curriculum the school-wide BST Outdoors Programme. These ambitious residential trips develop skills and attributes students will use for the rest of their lives.

In February, several year groups enjoyed four-day excursions to various destinations in Japan, all contrasting with their daily life in Tokyo.

Secondary School students in Years 7–9 and 11 visited Hakuba, a ski resort in Nagano Prefecture. This trip included daily ski or snowboarding instruction for students of all ability levels, as well as a night skiing option for those in Year 11.

In the Primary School, Year 5 students travelled to Mount Norikura, on the border of Nagano and Gifu Prefectures. In addition to daily ski and snowboarding lessons, they enjoyed sledding and

indoor wall climbing, and learned how to safely build a fire.

Year 10 students visited Saito, Miyazaki Prefecture. This was a home-stay trip on which groups of four or five stayed with Japanese families. They experienced many aspects of rural Japanese life, including cooking, crafting, sightseeing and cultural activities. As an agricultural community, this destination offered the chance to experience living and working in a farming environment while using their Japanese language skills.

These trips provide opportunities for personal growth and independence that would not be possible in the classroom. Working together in unfamiliar environments allows students to expand their personal limits while improving their teamwork, motivation and self-esteem. That they get to do it in these beautiful, unique locations is one of the many benefits of being located in Japan. ❄️



# VIRUS CRISIS

How to keep business going

BY C BRYAN JONES

Securing employee safety, quickly adapting to a changing situation and planning how to operate in a very uncertain future. These are the challenges presented by the Covid-19 outbreak, according to Jaguar Land Rover Japan Chief Executive Magnus Hansson. He told *ACUMEN* that, in the face of the rapidly expanding coronavirus pandemic, it is critical to take extra time to listen to staff, who have real concerns about multiple things now—private and business—and need leaders who have the empathy to understand and support them.



With that in mind, as face-to-face gatherings have been largely taken off the table, the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) has begun a series of digital events and initiatives, including webinars, podcasts and interactive Q&As.

At the heart of the discussion is business continuity. How can firms continue to operate with minimal disruption under the extreme measures being taken to contain the spread of the virus? How can they weather the economic storm that has rocked markets around the world?

## Challenges and response

The rapid dispersion of Covid-19 from its point of origin in Wuhan, China, to the rest of the world has left governments and businesses with little time to react. Big decisions have been thrust upon us, and knowing what to do can be difficult—even if your organisation had a contingency plan.

At the BCCJ's first webinar on 16 March, entitled Covid-19: The Leadership Challenge, GlaxoSmithKline K.K. (GSK) Vice President and International Head of Tech Jonathan Spraggs and Robert Walters Managing Director of Japan & Korea Jeremy Sampson tackled issues of business continuity in a session moderated by EY Japan Director and BCCJ Executive Committee (Excom) member Heather McLeish.

With what was initially a health risk becoming a financial risk, the scramble to protect staff, families and the viability of business, how do leaders rise to the challenge? What best practices can see you through the danger?

“It is time to lead with agility,” Spraggs said. “You have to give some confidence in your leadership, but you’ve also got to have some humility. No one expects that we’re computers that know everything.

“We’re doing our best to operate as normally as we possibly can. As a pharma company, people rely on our medicines to stay well, doctors rely on being able to access us to get the right information to treat their patients. As much as possible, we’re trying to operate as normally as we can to ensure business as usual and that patients can access medicines. So, our offices are in a situation where they’re not actually closed, but we’re advising people to work from home as much as possible”.

Sampson said that Robert Walters has been doing much the same. “We’re strongly encouraging all of our employees to work from home. One of the things that was the most important for us, when we decided to make the decision, was to ensure that we could provide seamless service to our clients and candidates. We didn’t want any client or candidate to get the impression that we weren’t working as per usual. Thankfully, I think we’ve been able to achieve that to a really large degree”.

Beyond the webinar, *ACUMEN* spoke with other leaders to find out how smaller firms are reacting. Robert Heldt, president and co-founder of Custom Media KK, publisher of *ACUMEN*, said: “The main priority by far for firms and leaders should be the safety,



From left: Jeremy Sampson, Jonathan Spraggs and Heather McLeish

“The main priority by far for firms and leaders should be the safety, comfort and peace of mind of staff, clients and other stakeholders”. —Robert Heldt

comfort and peace of mind of staff, clients and other stakeholders. It is critical to keep strong communication channels open and provide regular updates, support, encouragement and understanding”.

Dr Greg Story, president of Dale Carnegie Training Japan K.K., echoed this and the initial reactions of Spraggs and Sampson. “Protecting the staff’s health is the number-one priority, so that means moving work to home to enable people to isolate themselves from the virus”.

## Shift to home

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, working from home was already a hot topic in Japan, a country that trails far behind the UK and many others in this area. But it was being treated as a nicety, something that might help alleviate transit congestion during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic



Games. With a recent Reuters poll finding that 83% of Japanese firms have no remote work options in place—and 73% saying they were not planning to offer the option even during the Games, despite the government’s request—Covid-19 has pushed many to quickly implement a work style they have been heavily resisting.

But not everyone has such reservations. BCCJ member firms such as GSK and EY Japan have had systems in place for years, making adaptation to the present crisis easier. Others already rely on remote working as their primary mode of operation.

Tove Kinooka, a BCCJ Excom member who also leads the chamber’s Responsible Business Task Force, is one such person. Her firm, Global Perspectives K.K., has a small core team of four people.



“We have always worked from home, so staying engaged and connected with internal work projects and people has not been an issue,” she explained. “Our biggest concern has been how to maintain work-life balance. For my co-founder and myself, particularly, our business is our passion, so switching off—mentally and literally—when the computer is constantly near to hand has always been a challenge”.

At Jaguar Land Rover, Hansson said unlimited work from home was immediately offered to everyone “to save them time and exposure, and liberate them to find the best way to balance their lives and yet deliver in their jobs”. The firm already had work from home policies and the necessary technology enabled for several years.

### Best laid plans

GSK was also tech-ready. “Pretty much everything we do could be done remotely where technology

is required,” Spraggs said. “And, with the Olympics coming up, we’ve been preparing for the past year and a half. We actually ran a couple of simulations where we asked everybody to work from home for a day. And we did that a couple of times. The idea was, we do that during the Olympic period. Certainly that aided our planning for this scenario”.

But even with such planning, nothing’s perfect, he added. “You can never predict the exact crisis you are going to have. There are some adjustments we need to make along the way, but we’ve got a pretty solid plan in place and, so far, it’s working extremely well”.

Robert Walters, meanwhile, faced a scenario being played out in a majority of firms. Sampson and his team had to take quick action and learn on the fly. “We didn’t have any current work-from-home initiatives or setup in place at all—except for, of course, case-by-case scenarios with working parents, working mothers and situations like that,” he explained. “But, thankfully, we had the technology, which we brought out in the past 18 months or so. Everybody has full remote capabilities, but we were still in early stages of discussion, in terms of remote working and smart working. We hadn’t taken the plunge just yet”.

This means that the firm—like most—had to take the plunge in a very short time. Sampson said that the trigger point for Robert Walters was when the government came out on 25 February and said they strongly recommended teleworking.

“From the following day, we had everybody working from home. We have probably about 10% coming into the office. But, I think what we were able to achieve is what would have probably taken six months of small-scale trials, workshops, discussion and debate. We were able to achieve it in about a week or so”.

### Being productive

With this forced shift to teleworking comes concern over collaboration and productivity.

As someone for whom working from home was already the norm, Kinooka gave *ACUMEN* two tips for those diving into the water for the first time.

- “Regular, short team check-ins are useful for maintaining a sense of structure to the day and for keeping up to date on progress. We do them most mornings,” she said.
- “Video is always preferable to just audio, and definitely better than an email or text message. It is much easier to feel connected when you can see who you’re talking to, and video is particularly helpful for multicultural teams to avoid the misunderstandings that can occur when you’re relying only on spoken communication in a second or third language”.

Sampson said that Robert Walters is also making morning check-ins part of their process. “We start every morning—every team—with an 8:45 meeting, and that continues every single day. It is the morning team review session, and we just do that by Skype.

“The other best practice that we’ve implemented is that, by default, all calls will be video calls. That just ensures there’s more face-to-face interaction and more engagement”.

While staff might be working remotely, it’s still business as usual, he said, so you go through the same process and you insist on the same standards that you would in the office.

On that point, Spraggs shared a personal strategy that keeps him locked into his normal routine.

“I walk to work. If I’m working at home, I still do that walk. I’m not actually walking to work, but I try and keep that routine,” he explained. “I get up, I do that walk. That’s when I do my mental preparation, actually, whether I’m going to the office or whether I’m going to work from home. I keep that going and keep having those same connection points”.

Keeping a routine and maintaining contact with colleagues—especially through video—can go a long way towards alleviating what Story warns of when working from home: a feeling of isolation. “We need to make opportunities to meet online with the same cadence as we usually would. Hold regular online meetings, have everyone set clear goals and priorities, hold people accountable for delivering them, be supportive of the changed conditions and have people work in teams rather than on their own whenever possible”.



Dr Greg Story presenting at a BCCJ session.



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### Staying alive

Covid-19 poses a threat not only to the health of people but also to business. As of 21 March, the FTSE100 had lost 25% of its value, the US stock market had shed 35%—falling at a rate faster than during the Wall Street crash of 1929 that led to the Great Depression—and the Nikkei 225 was down 29%. This sudden economic downturn—triggered largely by the extreme measures being ordered to slow the spread of the coronavirus—has sent shockwaves through the business world. How can you give your firm the best chance of surviving?

“Especially in such uncertain times, it is crucial for firms to be innovative, resilient and carefully consider the implications of their business health, relationships and communications with their clients, partners and stakeholders,” said Heldt.

“Business confidence is often first to feel the heat, with the domino effect from large organisations cutting spend trickling down to small and medium-size enterprises that rely on them for regular revenues; this is counter-productive. Many large organisations in Japan are cash-rich, so this is a rare opportunity for them to look at innovative ways to support the economy, convey their messages and prepare for the eventual and inevitable return to normality instead of cutting HR or marketing spend,” he added. “Throughout history, we have seen how innovative, agile and competitive firms get it right during both difficult and easy times. They capture market share and are best placed to capitalise on the eventual rebound and beyond”.

Story and Kinooka are both turning the forced change into an opportunity to innovate and position their firms to better serve customers. Dale Carnegie and Global Perspectives have a similar problem: both provide in-person training, something not possible now that social distancing is imperative.

“Classroom revenues are at zero and we are now building our online remote delivery classes,” Story said. Dale Carnegie is also rapidly developing and deploying a line-up of online training programmes, in Japanese and English, to help leaders and team members learn how to best deal with the challenges of the pandemic.

Global Perspectives is taking the same approach. Kinooka explained that, while they had discussed shifting deliver to online for years, they had always seen it as a nice-to-have rather than an essential part of their line-up. Covid-19 has changed that.

“We have cut all unnecessary spending, we are preserving cash, we have the team understanding that there will be salary cuts once cash burns low and we have applied for government loans”.

“We are now working with clients to create online versions of our offerings,” she said. “The financial return will not be immediate, but the benefit of not being able to do our face-to-face work is that we currently have time to focus on this—so it will be ready to go live very soon”.

In the meantime, firms have put the brakes on expenses as much as possible. “We have cut all unnecessary spending, we are preserving cash, we have the team understanding that there will be salary cuts once cash burns low and we have applied for government loans,” Story said.

Hansson echoed the importance of fiscal restraint. “Preserving and controlling cash—and instilling total cost discipline—is vital. But, at the same time, you must develop ideas to stimulate

demand and be ready for growth again as soon as customers’ confidence returns”.

Kinooka warned not to assume things will be back to normal soon, however. “Nobody knows how long the situation will last, and even when restrictions are lifted the world will likely be very different,” she said. “We can use this time to get ready for that new normal by using the enforced change to identify what we are doing well, what we could do differently and what opportunities there are to create new business models.

“Shifting our mindset from victim mode to proactively looking for opportunities is the true meaning of resilience,” she added. “This will help us to be better prepared for situations such as this in the future” ❀

### Important notice to all independent and small businesses in Japan:

#### WE’RE IN THIS TOGETHER, SO LET’S SUPPORT EACH OTHER!

We are living in unprecedented times. The Covid-19 coronavirus is a global pandemic and the full effects on business are still unknown. What we do know is that the coming downturn is going to hit small and independent businesses sooner and harder than large corporations. While we all know that supporting everyone is important, Custom Media, as an SME, wondered what we could do to help small and independent businesses out there.

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promotion to audiences that they may not have been able to connect with previously to help all of us get through this uncharted economy.

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# MATTHEW KNOWLES

Country director of the British Council, Japan

BY SIMON FARRELL

Founded in 1953, The British Council, Japan started 2020 by appointing a new director. Matt Knowles brings 16 years of expertise in international cultural and educational exchanges to the position that he took over from Matt Burney in January. *ACUMEN* spoke with Knowles in late February.

**What legacy has your predecessor left?**

Matt Burney's legacy is a terrific team and a vibrant programme. This year presents a feast of special events as we deliver the UK in JAPAN 2019-20 campaign. The National Gallery and the work of the designer and architect Thomas Heatherwick will both be featured, bringing the best of British art and culture to these shores.

It is going to be the greatest privilege to welcome such a range of our leading institutions. The UK in JAPAN 2019-20 campaign is launching 100 new creative partnerships with a focus on the ways in which the arts can support well-being, diversity and inclusion in our societies.

Equality, diversity and inclusion have been the guiding ideals in all the British Council offices that I have served. These values sit at the heart of our



British Council showcases the new businesses and products set up by the graduates of UK universities.



Ilan McKellen in China on the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

cultural relations mission: to harness the power of diversity to challenge, to see new perspectives and to learn from the differences. We champion equal access to the arts and to education for everyone. The arts have extraordinary power to transcend national and cultural borders, to help us reflect on shared challenges and remind us of who we are in difficult times.

**You arrived in the run-up to the UK in JAPAN 2019-20 campaign and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Has it been a baptism of fire?**

I was anticipating a steep learning curve—to fall in step with, and start appreciating, how Japan works and how business is done; to discern how I can contribute to an understanding of where the UK can look to learn from Japan and where the UK may have valuable experience to share.

**How does promoting British culture in Japan differ from in other countries?**

I am at an early stage in forming my impressions. One obvious similarity is that both the UK and Japan share the values of liberal democracy. Both are comparatively small countries, which punch above their weight among the world's largest economies.

**Bio**

- With 16 years of expertise in international cultural and educational exchanges, Knowles holds master's degrees in theology from the University of Edinburgh and Columbia University in New York.
- He began his career at the Scottish Government's education department and has worked at the British Council in Edinburgh, Berlin, Dhaka, London and China.
- Plays bass guitar, supports the England rugby team and lives in Tokyo with his wife and three young children.





PHOTO: BRITISH COUNCIL / KENICHI AIKAWA



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China made him an Honorary Envoy of Friendship.

Both are rooted in historic cultures and treasured traditions. This means that, although these are two very different countries, living a great distance apart, there is an undergirding affinity: strong national identity, a rich and deep culture, and the determination to make one's way in the world with creativity and enterprise. This affinity will help us to grow and blossom together.

#### How could Brexit affect UK-Japan cultural ties?

Japan is high on the UK's priority list as we work to accelerate new trade agreements following the UK's departure from the European Union. One of the distinctive qualities of the British Council's work is the belief in investing for the long term. New business agreements have an immediate and quantifiable return.

Much of our work, by comparison, is planning for the future. The British Council has an important role in nurturing a generation with the language skills and the practical experience to carry forward the trading relationship.

And cultural collaborations play their part as a powerful expression of the friendship between our two countries. These benefits are more difficult to quantify, but they are indispensable in promoting and deepening our mutual understanding.

#### Technology and innovation are changing the workplace. How about at the British Council?

Yes, it is transforming the way in which our teams can share ideas and work collaboratively across the world. It is also changing the nature of our business, in the move from paper-and-pen examinations to computer-delivered tests.

And there are new technologies to explore and to weigh. Virtual reality (VR) is offering us new immersive experiences in the arts. During the Philharmonia Orchestra's recent tour, they showcased their latest developments in VR and spatial audio, transporting an audience at the

[The UK and Japan] both are comparatively small countries, which punch above their weight among the world's largest economies.

Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre into the very heart of the orchestra.

With regards to artificial intelligence (AI), clearly algorithms have enormous potential to support language learning. However, at this stage, there is some way to go in teaching AI to appreciate the subtlety of language.

#### Do UK and Japanese universities work together?

There are mature partnerships across the spectrum of academic disciplines. A single UK institution can work with as many as 30 Japanese partners. These links include research collaboration as well as student and academic exchange.

#### About the British Council

Founded in 1934, the British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. As an executive non-departmental public body, a public corporation and a charity, the British Council operates at arm's length from the UK government and does not carry out its functions on behalf of the Crown.

Located in more than 100 countries on six continents, some 7,000 staff work with thousands of professionals and policy-makers, and millions of young people every year, through cultural programmes and by teaching English using modern communicative methods and an exam service.

Other work includes higher education, supporting people to study in the UK and encouraging international partnerships in the arts.

To reference one flagship initiative, the British Council is proud to support a university consortium called RENKEI—the Japan-UK Research and Education Network for Knowledge Economy Initiatives—made up of 12 universities in the UK and Japan. The group is focusing this year on climate change and healthy ageing.

#### How does a British further education compare with other English-language systems?

One strength of a UK education is the way in which our system prizes and cultivates creativity. Another strength lies in the diversity of courses on offer, with more than 80,000 to choose from. And the UK education system is also known for its industry-university collaborations, which help to promote entrepreneurship and employability.

#### Tell us about the Leaders of English Education Project (LEEP).

The Japanese Ministry of Education commissioned the British Council to deliver this five-year teacher development programme in 2014. The programme trained 80,000 "English Leaders" from every prefecture in Japan to help them more effectively teach the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing in English, in line with the government's English education reforms.

From 2020, the Japanese government is introducing a new curriculum which aims to equip an increasing number of school-leavers with practical English skills.

The government is also considering the introduction of new tests to assess students' speaking and writing abilities, and the UK stands ready to offer its learning and its networks in support of this important agenda. 🇬🇧



**W**ales and Japan have a relationship that dates back more than 150 years. Some of the first Japanese railways were built with Welsh steel at the beginning of the Meiji Period (1868–1912), and in the 1970s there was a wave of Japanese investment into the then-principality. As a result of the Rugby World Cup 2019, interest in Wales among Japanese is at an all-time high. *ACUMEN* sat down with Robin Walker, the Welsh government's senior representative to Japan, to learn more about his experience, Wales–Japan industry connections and what the future holds.

#### Where are you from?

I grew up in Somerset, in a little village called Priddy in the Mendip Hills. So, not quite in Wales, but within sight of Wales. I lived there until I was 18, when I moved to London for university.

#### How did you get involved with the government?

After four years of studying law at university in London and Paris, I was ready to live away from Europe for a while, and it was actually at a career talk by the British Civil Service where I came across the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. I knew very little about Japan in advance of that, but discovered this wonderful opportunity to go and teach for a while. I had an interest in either becoming a lawyer or working for the government, so I took a little bit of time over here in Japan, learned a bit about the world, and then went back and enjoyed the Civil Service Fast Stream.

#### Tell me more about your government work.

My civil service career started in the Home Office, and I've also had spells seconded to the European Commission and to the Government Digital Service. My focus from 2012 until last year was on European relations, various elements of European negotiation and then forming the new relationship with Europe from 2016 after the EU referendum. Whilst I was at

Cybersecurity is obviously an increasingly large topic of discussion here in Japan [and] where there's a lot of expertise in Wales.

the Government Digital Service, I also picked up some wider international work, including conversing with the Japanese government about how they provide digital services online and how we can work together to improve those services. That was just as they were rolling out the My Number system, so we were considering how that works on smartphones and things like that. It was my one formal area of interaction with Japan.

#### How does it compare now with a decade ago?

It's partly a comparison between a reasonably small town in the northern prefecture of Akita and Tokyo, which is a world away in terms of lifestyle. With the G20, the Rugby World Cup and the Olympics, Japan is clearly putting a lot of energy into international relations and its image on the world stage. There's also clearly a far higher level of immigration—you see it in Tokyo especially, and also elsewhere. Over the past 10 years, I think there has been a fairly dramatic change in Japan. The ageing population is having an impact on social thinking, which would have come up less in conversation 10 years ago. Now, when I go back to Akita, some of the

elementary schools where I taught have closed because there aren't enough students to fill them. It's a topic of conversation. People are thinking about it and it's affecting the approach they take to everything.

At a bigger government-to-government level, sustainability is part of the agenda in a way that it wasn't 10 years ago. Thinking about the green agenda—and how Japan interacts with that—is challenging, given some of its traditional industries and the importance of protecting them. So, I think there's been some social change both in terms of immigration and in terms of thinking about how Japan is at the front of some of the challenges that the world faces in relation to sustainability.

#### How does Japanese investment impact Wales?

It makes an impact partly by being across all of Wales, not just the biggest centres of economic activity. There's also a lot of wider community engagement around it.

The Wales–Japan Club, for example, which is a Japanese community in Wales, has a Saturday school where Japanese children can learn



PHOTO: © BRYAN JONES



Japanese—there are few opportunities to do that outside London. But we know that people are coming across from Bath and Bristol for it as well. That club is based in Cardiff, and they do a number of exhibition engagements between Japanese culture and Welsh culture.

The National Museum Cardiff held an exhibition in 2018 called Kizuna, which focused on the link between Wales and Japan. It was very successful and resulted in requests for more opportunities to learn about Japanese culture.

Additionally, the Embassy of Japan in the UK has an Honorary Consul based in Wales, Keith Dunn, who has been really good at building community links—reciprocated by the wonderful work of the St David’s Society and Clwb Hiraeth here in Japan.

**What are the bilateral trade opportunities?**

One area where we might see an increase is food and drink (page 10). Many firms are looking to use the products they’ve launched here and introduce them to the UK, Europe or wider global markets using Wales as one of the bases of operation. Welsh food and drink also have a growing reputation here in Japan—Welsh lamb, in particular, since the red meat ban was lifted.

Other areas, in terms of priorities for the Welsh government, are cybersecurity and compound semiconductors, where Wales has expertise that doesn’t exist anywhere else in the world. Cybersecurity is obviously an increasingly large topic of discussion here in Japan. It’s an area where it’s recognised that Japan has fallen a little bit behind the global curve. It’s an area where there’s a lot of expertise in Wales; amongst others, the University of South Wales is doing a lot of work on it.

Compound semiconductors are essential pieces of tech that we use every day. Most iPhones have compound semiconductor chips in them that use wafers manufactured in South Wales by a company called IQE. There are some really big challenges at the moment around the quality—and in particular



Pierhead Building on Cardiff Bay

the reliability—of the materials that are used to manufacture them. Wales is putting a lot of energy into this by bringing together universities and others researching which substances make the most effective compound semiconductors.

**How do bilateral organisations cooperate?**

I think one of the really exciting areas at the moment is sustainability. In 2015, Wales was the first country in the world to legislate for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. So, we’ve got something called the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which requires every public authority to think about the sustainability of their major decisions. It is really good to see how that links through to some of the business opportunities growing in Wales at the moment.

The future of automotive is one of the biggest, clearest examples of a challenge, in terms of clean growth and how we reach carbon neutrality. The UK central government recently adjusted its targets to eliminate fossil fuel-based cars on all roads by 2035. We have some really interesting things happening in Wales to help achieve that. For example, Aston Martin is opening a new factory in Wales this year, which will be the home of electrification, and all their electric vehicles will be produced at that factory in South Wales.

To give another example, there’s some great research going on in Swansea surrounding carbon-neutral housebuilding. This is a research centre that’s a spinoff from Swansea University. A number of Japanese firms are now in conversation about how to start incorporating some of those carbon-neutral building techniques into the work they’re doing, which is obviously huge in terms of interest in the UK market. The things they’re doing in Japan—and the ability to get some of that carbon-neutral housing technology into the world—is a

There are three key words in particular, three pillars, that the strategy sits around: creativity, sustainability and technology.

really good opportunity, and a good example, of how the Welsh–Japanese relationship can be a major benefit globally, as well as to the Japanese companies investing in Wales.

**What is Wales’ new International Strategy?**

There are three key words in particular, three pillars, that the strategy sits around:

- creativity
- sustainability
- technology

That feels like a really good way to capture how Wales is hoping to position itself on the world stage. There’s a lot of opportunity around all three pillars to grow the relationship with Japan. For me, it’s about keeping the focus on all three, getting the investment and trade right but also the wider relationships. Working with the other partners who are keen to grow their relationships and ensuring that we build on that momentum is hugely important.

**Tell us your thoughts on Brexit.**

Wales and Japan both currently benefit from the EU–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and will continue to do so until the end of the year.

Whilst securing a deep partnership with the European Union is our absolute priority, we are urging the UK government to prioritise negotiations for a UK–Japan free trade agreement and are pleased that they are doing so. We hope an agreement can be reached rapidly between the UK and Japan that retains the benefits of the EPA for both Wales and Japan and explores areas where we may strengthen trade between our nations.

The UK government’s negotiations with the EU this year will also be critically important for the whole of Wales, as well as Japanese companies in Wales. We are pressing for as close a relationship as possible to minimise any new trade barriers and recognise the integrated supply chains that exist between Wales, the EU and partners with which the EU currently has free trade agreements. 🇬🇧



FDI: Calbee, Japan’s largest manufacturer of savoury snacks, has created 50–60 jobs at their first UK site in Deeside, North Wales, and employs more than 200 across Britain.





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Motoazabu Jiyugaoka

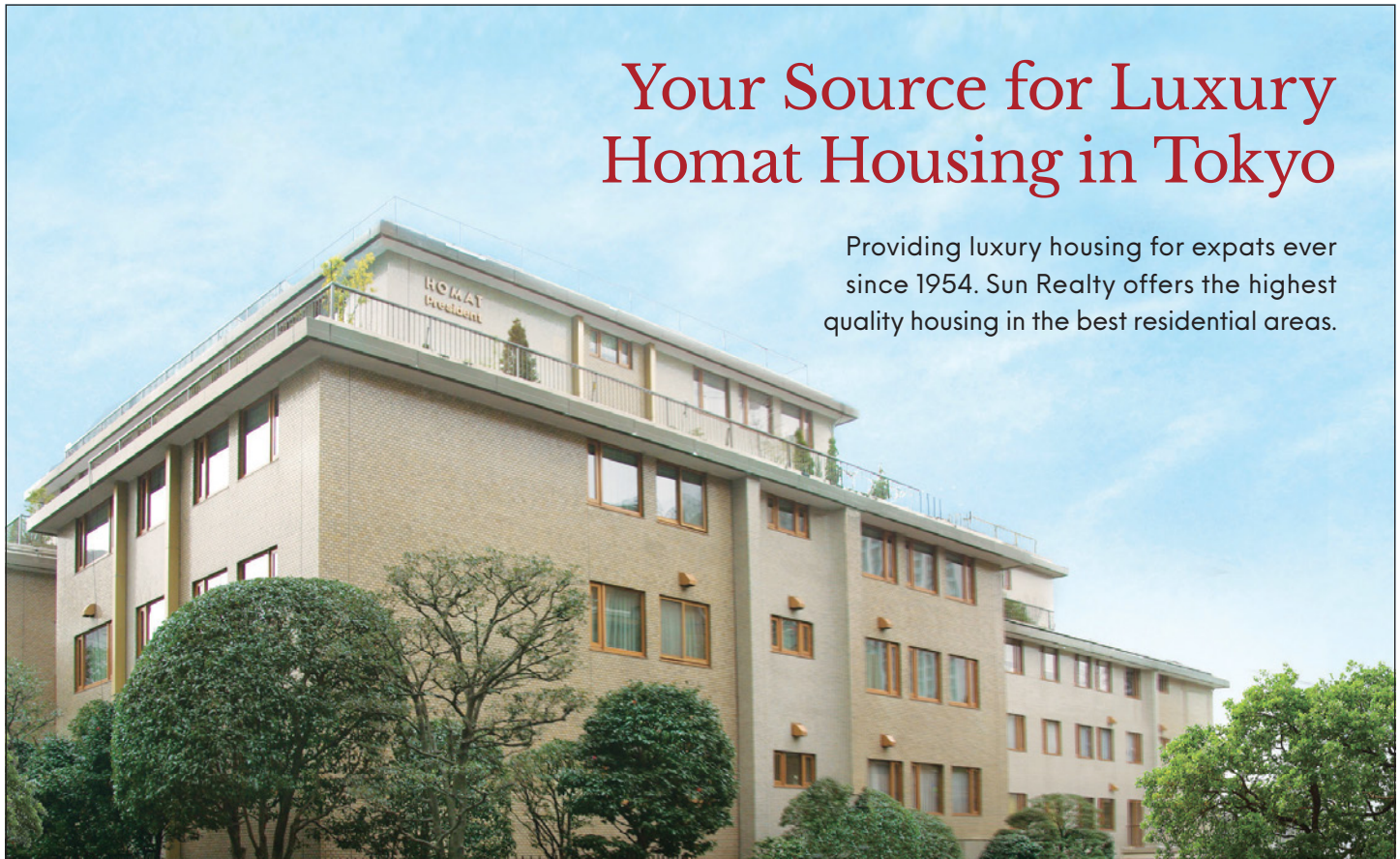
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# WHITE LYCRA AND SHINING ARMOUR

Karaoke night inspires knights-in-midlife-crisis

BY ROB WILLIAMS

Welcome to a series of articles about the build-up to June’s Knights in White Lycra (KIWL) flagship fundraising event: a four-day, 500km cycle ride through Japan with some British Chamber of Commerce in Japan members and firms. Representing 13 countries, about 45 amateur cyclists of all ages and abilities will battle Japan’s mountains to raise funds and awareness for marginalised children living in institutional care.

## Origins

I am often asked by younger people, Where did the name Knights in White Lycra come from? Some will know the classic hit “Nights in White Satin” by English rock band The Moody Blues. The song gave birth to the name of our group during a drunken Christmas karaoke session in 2012.

In the preceding hours, sat in the Hobgoblin British pub admiring our beer bellies, we wondered how we could get fit and give back to the country we call home. With the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami tragedy of 11 March, 2011, still in mind, we decided to help displaced survivors in Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture.

In 2013, 10 Brits overcame a blizzard to complete a 300km ride from Tokyo and raise ¥2.7mn. Arriving at the temporary accommodation in Minamisoma—cheered in by the occupants—was a tear-jerking



motivation for an annual event. Seven years later, we have raised ¥67mn for needy communities in Japan—particularly disadvantaged children.

## Helping hands

How does KIWL raise about ¥10mn per year? Like any successful firm, by being a team of like-minded people motivated by common goals. It starts in January with a recruitment drive for riders. Having experienced the elation of achieving a huge personal challenge, and the emotion of meeting the kids for whom they were raising funds at the finish line, many riders return for another year. We are also inspired by “zeroes to heroes,” beginners who rise to the immense challenge—from couch to 500km!

February marked the deadline for cyclists’ deposits, separating the serious from the pretenders. About 40 men and women committed to four months of pain in the gym and on the road to

become physically ready and focused on raising at least ¥100,000 each for our charity.

## Firm commitment

February was a busy time for me, not only servicing clients in my day job but also persuading firms to adorn our jerseys with their logos in return for a donation to our chosen children’s charity, YouMeWe ([www.youmewenpo.org](http://www.youmewenpo.org)). This year, I am greatly indebted to Jody Pang, strategic accounts director at Custom Media KK, publisher of ACUMEN, for introducing 76° LUBRICANTS, our biggest sponsor ever.

Custom Media also kindly produces for us a pro-bono video every year of our training, fundraising and the actual ride which greatly helps attract riders and sponsors for the next ride. And three of their staff are riding with us this year—including two women, one of whom is on her second trip as the firm’s videographer:



Megan



Miho



Garreth

Why do firms sponsor KIWL? Some do so for commercial exposure or to support employees who want to get fit while also giving back. Others just wish to quietly make a community contribution without active involvement. Kit sponsorship alone usually raises ¥4mn—a large portion of our fundraising goals.

KIWL also holds fringe events throughout the year. These include the Imperial Palace Walk, a quiz night, a run, a Futsal tournament and golf day. Non-cyclists can participate to get fit and give back with KIWL, too.

Next issue, I shall expand on the work of YouMeWe and focus on our sponsors and unsung heroes. Now I should get back to my day job or clients reading this will wonder whether I am managing their money properly! 🇬🇧

Learn more at: [www.kiwl.net](http://www.kiwl.net)



Meeting the children is a highlight of being part of KIWL.

# JAPAN AWARDS ORDER OF THE RISING SUN TO MARIE CONTE-HELM OBE

Professor honoured for service to Japan–UK relations

BY CUSTOM MEDIA

On 30 January, at a London event attended by more than 50 members of the UK–Japan community, Japanese Ambassador Yasumasa Nagamine awarded Professor Marie Conte-Helm one of Japan’s highest honours—the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette—in recognition of her dedication and significant contributions to the promotion of mutual understanding and cultural exchange between Japan and the United Kingdom.

Conte-Helm received the special honour at the Embassy of Japan in the UK, where she started her career in the 1970s working on educational outreach. She went on to teach at Sunderland and Northumbria universities, where she specialised in Japan–UK relations and the history of the bilateral relationship.

Publishing several books and papers on the advancement of Japan’s relations with the UK and Europe, her work shed light on how these ties came to flourish and prosper.

## Active engagement

Conte-Helm took part in cultural exchange activities throughout her academic career, serving

Not only has she left her mark on today’s dynamic Japan–UK relationship, she has also touched many lives along the way.

on various committees for Japan-related festivals, including the 1991 Japan Festival and Japan 2001. Her involvement in these activities provided numerous opportunities for new local employees of Japanese firms to learn more about Japanese culture, and for Japanese families to better interact with and integrate into the wider UK community.

As Director General of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, she immersed herself in further projects, including scholarship programmes that provided opportunities for the next generation of British leaders to learn the Japanese language.

Four decades after she began her career at the Embassy, Conte-Helm was appointed an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2011 in recognition of her service to UK–Japan educational and cultural relations. That same year, she was named executive director of the UK–Japan 21st Century Group, one of the foremost bodies

dedicated to fostering the bilateral relationship. Her years of dedicated work and support have been highly praised by members of the group.

## Touching acceptance

Conte-Helm told *ACUMEN*: “When I heard that I would receive this honour from the Japanese government, I was both surprised and gratified. My involvement with Japan grew out of my academic interest in the history and culture of the country. Japan–UK relations became important to me through experiencing so many successful exchanges and collaborations over the years, and seeing the benefits of working together”.

Asked how today’s youth can carry the torch, she said, “The next generation can strengthen the relationship in various ways, particularly through direct contact, visiting and studying in each other’s countries and undertaking language study, which opens the door to different cultures”.

In his speech, Ambassador Nagamine paid tribute to Conte-Helm’s contributions, saying, “Not only has she left her mark on today’s dynamic Japan–UK relationship, she has also touched many lives along the way”.

During her acceptance speech, Conte-Helm said it was a great honour to receive the commendation—in particular for something she has enjoyed doing for so many years. Thanking her husband and daughter for all their support—and everyone for joining in the evening and sharing this very special occasion—she said she was very grateful for having received the honour and looks forward to continuing her many connections with Japan.

In a toast, Sir David Warren KCMG, Chairman of the Japan Society in London and former British Ambassador to Japan (2008–12), said it was a great privilege to have had the opportunity to work with Conte-Helm and to be able to offer congratulations to her on this occasion. 🌸





# BCCJ WINS INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF THE YEAR 2019

Gonged for 5.0, BBA, UK–Japan ties, mentor series and *ACUMEN*



For the third year running, cloud platform provider EventBank, which specialises in chamber of commerce management solutions, held the APAC International Chamber of Commerce Awards. And when the winners were announced on 17 January, the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) topped the International Chamber of the Year category.

The BCCJ was recognised specifically for its BCCJ 5.0 initiative, as well as its annual British Business Awards gala and professional delivery of member services.

## Work that matters

The BCCJ was also singled out for its contributions to members and the furtherance of UK–Japan relations over the past year.

“The BCCJ has a wide range of high-quality offerings for all its stakeholders— from electronic data interchange, through business services to business awards, and beyond. Their activities even cover the needs of international investors,” said judge Asli (Akdeniz) Özelli, executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce, Turkey.

*BCCJ ACUMEN* was also acknowledged for its vital role in promoting and sustaining the 5.0 project. Özelli told Custom Media Publisher and *ACUMEN* Editor-in-Chief Simon Farrell that it is important for the BCCJ to have a sustainable PR tool. “I believe it is important to inform all these stakeholders about the 5.0 project”.

## Categories

This year the APAC Chamber of Commerce Awards saw a record number of nominations across eight categories:

- **Large Chamber of the Year**  
Junior Chamber International (JCI) Manila
- **Small Chamber of the Year**  
Australia Africa Chamber of Commerce
- **International Chamber of the Year**  
British Chamber of Commerce in Japan
- **Local Chamber of the Year**  
Cowra Business Chamber
- **Rising Star of the Year**  
Stella Soh, manager of marketing and branding, American Chamber of Commerce Singapore
- **Executive of the Year**  
Daniel James Alexander, president of the Australian–New Zealand Chamber of Commerce Philippines
- **Excellence in Technology & Innovation**  
British Chamber of Commerce in China
- **Best Event of the Year**  
AmCham Women HERo Awards (American Chamber of Commerce Singapore)

Those chosen made the greatest impact and are at the very top of their game.

The organisers said that the judging panel, which comprises worldwide senior-level chamber experts, was looking for outstanding achievements of chambers of commerce around the Asia-Pacific region, and that those chosen made the greatest impact and are at the very top of their game.

## Diverse winners

Eric L. Schmidt, chief executive and co-founder of EventBank said: “Chambers of commerce help businesses band together and address important concerns and issues for the business community. It’s wonderful to see their hard work and innovative ideas rewarded at this exciting initiative. I’d like to congratulate this year’s hugely diverse range of winners whose positive impact reflects the very high standard in the chamber of commerce industry and leadership across the Asia-Pacific”.

# SENSATIONAL SHIMANE

Explore a land of UNESCO-honoured art, cuisine and tradition

## Adachi Museum of Art

Founded in 1970 by textile wholesaler Zenko Adachi, the Adachi Museum of Art in Yasugi City is home to works by Japanese master painter Yokoyama Taikan. Adachi loved not only art but also gardens and created the museum as a place where works of artists and nature could co-exist. The expansive 165,000m<sup>2</sup> grounds include the museum building and six exquisite gardens designed by Adachi. Together, these areas—which he called “living Japanese paintings”—have been ranked first among all gardens in Japan by *Sukiya Living Magazine* for 17 consecutive years.



## Omori Townscape

Part of the UNESCO World Heritage site that includes Iwami Ginzan, the town of Omori once served as the management base for the silver mine. During the Edo Period (1603–1867), many samurai and wealthy merchants of the Kumagai family had residences in Omori. The town has long been an Historic Preservation District and has been carefully maintained to appear as it did 200 years ago. Many traditional wooden buildings, with red tile roofs called *sekishu-gawara*, remain and preserve the atmosphere of life in the town when silver mining was at its height. Other spots to visit in Omori include the Kawashima residence and the 450-year-old Kigami Shrine.





### Iwami Ginzan

Located in central Shimane Prefecture, in the city of Oda, Iwami Ginzan is Japan's largest and most prominent silver mine. Active from its founding in 1526 until 1923, the mine produced a large portion of Japan's silver output, which accounted for about one-third of the world's supply at its peak. In 2007, Iwami Ginzan was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site in recognition of its key role in building economic ties between Japan and Europe, as well as the historic relationship between people and the surrounding mountains and forests. You can walk part of the mining tunnel for a glimpse into Japan's industrial past.



### Iwami Kagura

The local culture also gave birth to a traditional form of performing arts even older than Kabuki and Noh. With its origins in ancient Japanese mythology, Kagura was once performed by Shinto priests and shrine maidens to welcome and entertain deities. It was also a way of giving thanks for bountiful crops. Today, Kagura is especially popular in the Iwami region of western Shimane Prefecture, where performers dress in gorgeous costumes and dance to the rhythmic sounds of traditional Japanese instruments. About 130 organisations are active in the Iwami region and Kagura can be enjoyed every Saturday.



### Izumo Taisha Grand Shrine

According to folklore, Japan's gods gathered here each October of the lunar calendar to discuss the coming year's events. It is believed to be the country's oldest Shinto shrine and was designated a National Treasure of Japan in 1952. While it is not known when Izumo Taisha was built, it appears in records dating back to 950.

Thousands visit the important shrine each year to pray for good fortune and good relationships. While there, visit the back of the hall to find a cluster of rabbit statues that relate to a Japanese myth about the god Okuninushi, to whom the shrine is dedicated. He is said to have rescued a white rabbit from the jaws of a crocodile-like creature in the tale of *The Hare of Inaba*.



### Izumo Soba

There are many local culinary delights to be enjoyed in Shimane, including Izumo soba—one of three main types of buckwheat noodle in Japan. Because the full seed is used when the flour is milled, Izumo soba has a darker colour and richer aroma compared with other types. There are several shops on the grounds of Izumo Taisha where you can taste this delectable dish.



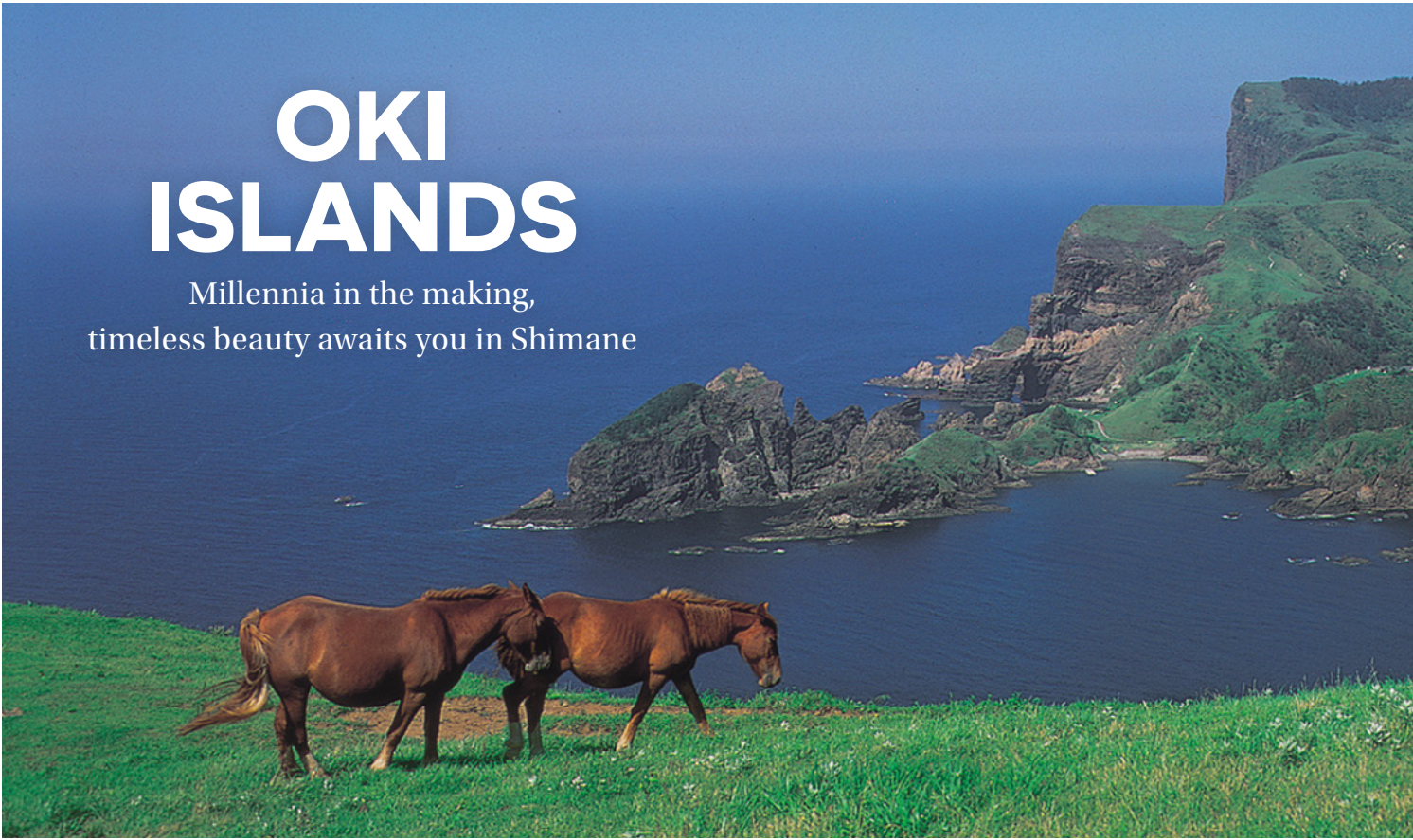
### Sake

One of the topics that the gods were said to have discussed when they gathered at Izumo Taisha is the brewing of sake. So important is this national drink made from rice that there are some 30 breweries in Shimane alone. In fact, the prefecture is considered the birthplace of sake. For a connection to the mythology that permeates the shrine, pair a local brew with soba. 🍷



# OKI ISLANDS

Millennia in the making,  
timeless beauty awaits you in Shimane










Surrounded by the splendour of the Sea of Japan is an archipelago that offers an incredible escape from frantic city life. Part of Shimane Prefecture, the Oki Islands are just 40–80km north of the main island of Honshu and provides a glimpse into nature’s past.

Of the 180 or so islands that comprise the archipelago, four are inhabited—Nakanoshima, Dogo, Nishinoshima and Chiburijima—and offer you numerous chances to bask in natural beauty born of a fiery past. Once part of the Eurasian

continent, these islands are the remnants of two massive stratovolcanoes that date back 7mn years. Portions of their summits became isolated islands more than 10,000 years ago. This geological origin led the United Nations to designate the Oki Islands a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2013.

The peaceful atmosphere is a breath of fresh air in our modern world and a window to a time when the majesty of nature dominated life in Japan. Take a break and explore the many wonders and activities the Oki Islands have to offer.



|       |   |                                  |   |                  |   |            |
|-------|---|----------------------------------|---|------------------|---|------------|
| Tokyo |  | Osaka                            |  | Okinoshima       |   |            |
|       | 1 hr  |                                  | 50 min  |                  |   |            |
| Tokyo |  | Izumo Enmusubi Airport (Shimane) |  | Okinoshima       |   |            |
|       | 1.5 hrs   |                                  | 30 min  |                  |   |            |
| Tokyo |  | Okayama                          |   | Sakaiminato Port |  | Okinoshima |
|       | 3.5 hrs   |                                  | 3.5 hrs   | 2.5 hrs*         |   |            |

\*When available, the Rainbow Jet cuts travel time to one hour.





#### **Matengai Cliff**

One of the highest sea cliffs in Japan, Matengai is a stunning vantage point 257m above frothing tides dancing against the rocks. Leave your stress behind and peer off into the distance as cows and horses graze on the lush greenery nearby. It's an ideal spot for ending your day with an absolutely breathtaking sunset.

#### **Kannon-Iwa Rock (Candle Rock)**

Another sight to take in at sunset is the Kannon-Iwa Rock. Standing some 16m tall, this striking natural structure was carved by thousands of years of strong wind and waves. As the sun sets behind the rock from mid-April to early June and late August to mid-September, the scene is reminiscent of a candle flickering in the growing darkness. The formation is called Kannon because many believe it resembles a bodhisattva—a future Buddha—sometimes called Kannon.

This geological origin led the United Nations to designate the Oki Islands a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2013.

#### **Tsutenkyo Arch**

Another stunning work of art crafted by wind and waves can be found as you follow the hiking trail up to Matengai Cliff. Meaning “Bridge of Heaven,” this remarkable formation has been carved out of a cave along the 13km Kuniga Coast on the western side of Nishinoshima Island.

#### **Activities**

In addition to hiking, there are many other ways to explore the Oki Islands. Grab a bicycle and ride around the relaxing landscape, take to the waters with one of the sea kayaking tours, or don scuba gear and deep dive into an underwater wonderland. 🇯🇵

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# AMAZING AIZU

Find gems of history and nature  
in Fukushima Prefecture



**W**ant to escape to Japan's past, when shoguns ruled the land and travelling meant a close personal connection with nature? Such a place is less than three hours northeast of Tokyo and can be easily accessed by rail. Fukushima Prefecture is home to well-preserved historical sites and beautiful nature that will take you back to another place in time. Here are three must-visit sites and an experience you'll never forget.

## Tsuruga Castle

Built in 1384, this flashpoint of several conflicts was originally called Kurokawa Castle until it was redesigned by the feudal lord Gamo Ujisato in 1592 and renamed Tsuruga Castle. Heavily damaged during the Boshin War (1868–69), which ended the shogunate and restored power to the Imperial Court, the original structure was demolished in 1874. The current Tsuruga Castle is a replica constructed in 1965 and renovated in 2011. From the top of the tower you can enjoy sweeping views of



the Aizu-Wakamatsu area, including the majestic 1,816m-high Mount Bandai. Inside the castle is a museum where you can explore the rich history of the area and get a taste of samurai life.

## Ouchijuku

During the Edo Period (1603–1867), the ruling shogunate required those travelling the Aizu–Nishi Kaido trade route, which connected Aizu with Nikko, to make the journey on foot. Because the trip took many days, stopovers were needed, and post towns began to pop up. Ouchijuku, located 20km south of Aizu, is one such town. Today it has been restored to appear just as it did in days gone by and has been designated an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings. Walking down the unpaved main street is like stepping into the past, and the variety of shops housed in the traditional thatched-roof buildings offer a taste of Edo cuisine, clothing and interiors.

## Tonohetsuri

One of Fukushima's must-see locations, the 200m-long Tonohetsuri—whose name means “dangerous cliff” or “steep slope” in the local Aizu dialect—is a sheer cliff overlooking the Agagawa River. The rocks that comprise the cliff formed more than 28mn years ago and feature cracks and strata that create striking patterns—particularly when intermixed with the brightly coloured foliage of autumn. The Tonohetsuri Bridge offers spectacular views as you cross the river to the cliff face, and the swaying motion of this suspension bridge adds a thrill to what is already a breathtaking example of nature's power and beauty. 🇯🇵



## Aizu Mount Express

Ready to head to Aizu-Wakamatsu and want to take the most scenic route? This rapid express immerses you in the enchanting environment of Fukushima Prefecture, passing Edo-Period post towns, hot springs and vibrant seasonal landscapes.

No reservations are needed. Just pay the basic fare, hop on and make your way across picturesque Fukushima!

For an extra-special memory, take part in Tobu Top Tours' popular Aizu Railway Train Operating Experience. For ¥8,500 per person, you can visit the rail yard and make two round trips from Aizu-Tajima Station to Aizu-Wakamatsu Station as a train operator and conductor. The price includes lunch and a special lecture before departure, and at the end of the journey you will receive a certificate.





# THE HISTORY DETECTIVE

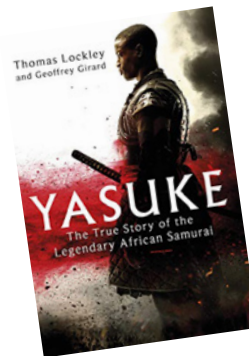
Finding twists and turns in Japan's past

BY C BRYAN JONES

The relationship between the UK and Japan has been a long and celebrated one. In 1600, William Adams—better known here as Miura Anjin—a seaman from Kent, became the first Briton to arrive in Japan, and the first permanent British diplomatic mission to Edo was established in 1859. Since the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, political and cultural relations have grown into one of the world's great bilateral friendships. But there are elements of those early years that are less well

## Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, specifically sent presents to King James I.

known, and *ACUMEN* spoke with British author Thomas Lockley, who is also a lecturer at Nihon University College of Law in Tokyo, to learn about connections he has uncovered in his research and his new book *Yasuke: The True Story of the Legendary African Samurai*, which depicts the real account of a foreign warrior in feudal Japan.



India Company in Japan. Much less known are those about the relationship between the countries and the motivations they had for forming it, which were extremely complex.

Japan was seen as a kind of mecca—technologically advanced and rich—and many of the legends that had been emanating to Europe over the centuries painted it as a place where the buildings were covered in gold. Europe was pretty peripheral at the time, and England was peripheral within Europe. Cut off



Looking towards Kyoto from the top of Oda Nobunaga's Azuchi Castle, where Yasuke lived in Omi Province.

### What brought you to Japan?

Like many people, I came with the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, 20 years ago. I stayed a couple of years in Tottori Prefecture and then returned to England. In 2009, my wife and I decided we wanted to come back to Japan, so we've been living in Chiba ever since.

### Why did you choose the JET Programme?

It looked like an interesting adventure to have after university. It is a long way from the UK, which piqued some exotic interest for me at the time. And it was working with children. Although I wasn't a teacher then, I've been a teacher ever since. It just seemed like a really good opportunity.

### What UK-Japan connections are not widely known?

There are some that are very well known, for example the story of William Adams and the story of the East



Lithograph of William Adams



from the continent because of wars and religious differences, it actually had very few friends. So England was reaching out to Japan—on the other side of the world—to attempt to forge a friendship and relationship between the rulers and the people of the two nations.

It's very interesting that Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, specifically sent presents to King James I.

In Elizabethan times, when they were going on the voyages, Queen Elizabeth sent letters with those ships to give to whomever they met. Sometimes they were very generic, and sometimes they were addressed to the Emperor of China or a specific Javan sultan, for example. In the case of Japan, far more was known, and the English sent gifts worthy of a great ruler, including the first telescope to find its way to these shores.

We don't really think about the motivations behind the relationship, but I feel it's pretty interesting that England really wanted to have a friendship with Japan. It was known that there was at least one Englishman in Japan already, so it was seen as the Holy Grail.

#### **You are talking about William Adams?**

Correct. But even before that, they thought there might be some English Jesuits or other people in Japan. We're talking about very old times, when communications were awful and it would take two years to get a message from Japan to Europe, so they didn't know; but they hoped there might be.

It could have also been very secretive. There were English Jesuits, and most of them were found in England and executed or imprisoned, but some did missionary activity in other parts of the world, including Brazil. So, it was quite reasonable

for English mariners to expect that there was an English presence in Japan.

#### **Tell me about this Yasuke, the African samurai.**

Various Japanese rulers and lords hired foreigners at the end of the 16th century for a variety of reasons, but mainly as warriors. And the first of these—documented anyway—happened to be an African. We don't know his true name, but the name which he was given—or by which he was called in Japan—was Yasuke. He was a young man, about 25, when he met Oda Nobunaga and the first record of his existence was made.

He was about 6ft 5in and strong—the strength of 10 men apparently. Everybody was about 5ft in those days, so he was huge—head and shoulders above everybody else. And he had extremely dark skin. The Japanese sources say it was the colour of ink. They had never seen anybody with skin that dark, so he was almost mistaken as a god or a demon, someone out of this world that had come to Earth. He was, therefore, an object of immense interest.

#### **How did you learn about Yasuke?**

Interestingly, I was researching Adams at the time. I happened to see a suggested link to the African who served Nobunaga, so I clicked it. That was probably in 2009. Most sources were already in the public domain. I did find some new sources not directly linked, but about other Africans at the time.

My book is basically a recreation of his life. There are about eight sources in total, covering about one year. So, a lot of the book is detective work. Where did he come from? How did he get here? What did he do afterwards? What did he do in that key year of his life, beyond what the simple sources tell us?

Luckily, he served two very powerful men—both of whom are very well recorded—so we know where he would have been on certain dates and such. We know how he got to Japan because he came with the Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, and we know that he was on the same ship.

We can put together an awful lot from extra sources, which pertain to Yasuke but maybe don't mention him directly, and the book is a recreation of that. But I also investigated menus from the time, for example, to find out exactly what would have been served up for dinner. I investigated the types of drink and the types of housing, etc. All these things give the book its meat and that seems to be what people like about it.

#### **How did you become a visiting scholar at the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)?**

I was offered a sabbatical from work and I talked to a friend of mine called Timon Screech. He's a professor at SOAS and I asked if he could arrange for me to be a visiting scholar. That came about, in a way, through Adams and the English-Japanese research. Also, Timon had been instrumental in giving some advice on the Yasuke story. We've had an academic relationship for four or five years. He's also involved in the commemorations of Adams' death this year. In fact, I'm helping to arrange a conference under his supervision for 23 May.

#### **What will you be presenting?**

We will be looking at the life of Adams in Japan and his life prior to that. I'll be looking mainly at the background—before Adams arrived in Japan—and other contacts between Japanese and English people. Then I'll be talking about the later years and will finish with Adams' death.

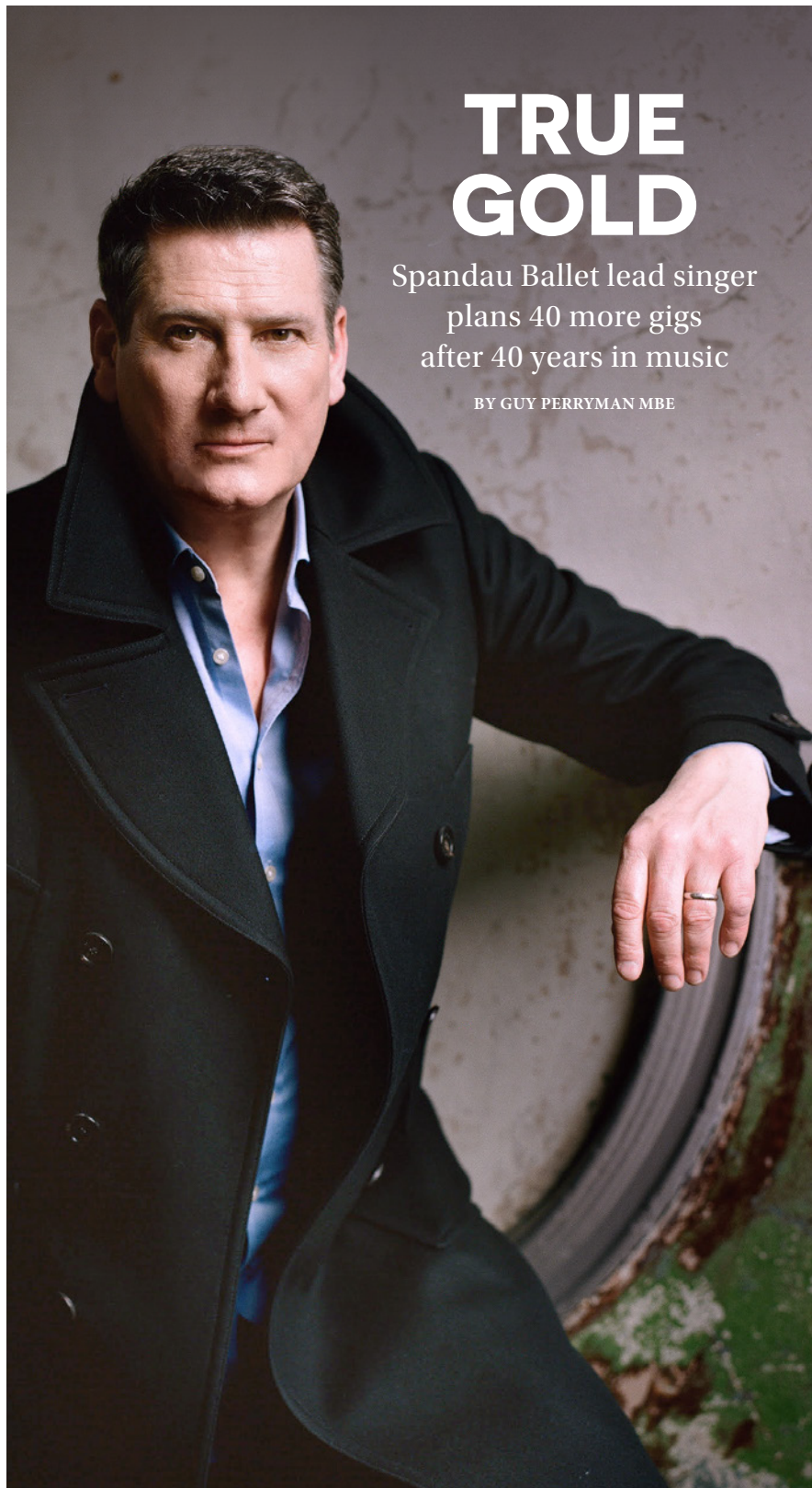
This will include Adams' inter-Asian trading missions. He did about four of them, including to Thailand, Vietnam and Okinawa. Other people will be speaking at the same conference, and we'll be finishing off with a talk from a Kyoto academic called Eleanor Yamaguchi, who will speak about Anglo-Japanese relations after Adams.

#### **Are you working on any new research?**

I can't go into details, but I'm working on an Anglo-Japanese story which is not about Adams. It's a virtually unknown story, so I'd rather not share more details, but it's in the final stages and, hopefully, will be published next year. 🇬🇧



Depiction of Yasuke sumo wrestling



# TRUE GOLD

Spandau Ballet lead singer plans 40 more gigs after 40 years in music

BY GUY PERRYMAN MBE

PHOTO: MODE ENTERTAINMENT

I met up with Tony Hadley, original lead vocalist from Spandau Ballet, backstage at Billboard Live Tokyo between soundcheck and the start of a show in February. We were informed by his manager that we had 15 minutes for the interview. But as soon as we started chatting, I realized Hadley was a man of many words and this could become a big conversation.

He was thrilled to be back in Japan. “I think Tokyo ... it’s a bit like being in a film. It’s a bit like when you go to New York, you feel like you’re on a film set. You are in another world. But it’s a good vibe. It’s a really good vibe.”

## Round and Round

Hadley reminisced briefly about the good times he’d had at Tokyo’s Lexington Queen, the notorious celebrity nightspot that was hosted by the legendary Bill Hersey who, sadly, passed away in 2018 and took many stories with him.

Hadley seems to have stories, too.

“We had some fun. Some really fun times, yeah. Some stories you probably don’t want to repeat.”

These days, Hadley is more of a family man, with five children of varying ages from five to 36. He said that next time he comes to Japan he’d like to bring them.

“The kids and I love to ski. And I have heard that the skiing is really, really good in Japan. Maybe we should come back next season.”

I asked Hadley about his childhood and whether he grew up in a musical household.

“In my house, my mum and dad were massively into Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Jack Jones, Ella Fitzgerald, Johnny Mathis. So, there was always music—especially on a Sunday morning leading up to the Sunday lunch, where all the family came round. So that’s where my love of swing music comes in, because I love all those guys. I saw Tony Bennett at the Royal Albert Hall just a few months ago, and he still has an amazing voice, he’s still singing great. I met him, and we took a picture with my mum as well. It was fantastic. That was a great moment, really cool!”

Speaking of someone who is a great singer, I mentioned that Hadley has a booming voice and was once compared to a foghorn.

“Yeah, it was sort of a caricature of me: Foghorn Hadley! I’ve got a very loud voice, but I was taught well, I was taught by an opera singer. She taught me how to preserve my voice and how to project it



and everything else. I'm really lucky that I still sing in the same keys. I look after my voice. I warm up before I go on, I warm down when I come off," he said. "And, doing two-hour shows, I have to say it's difficult; it's full on. I'll come off and I'll be sweaty. You put everything into it, but the adrenaline keeps you going. And the audience, actually. So, if they're happy, I'm happy."

I remarked how he has made the audiences happy for many years, and they are thrilled he's still performing Spandau Ballet's classics live.

"Well, it's been good. I mean, people ask me—since I sort of resigned from the band officially—the one question I do get asked a lot is, "Can you still sing the songs?" You know, the classic hits. Yes, I can. And yes, I do. So, there'll be 'Gold', there'll be 'True', 'Only When You Leave', 'Lifeline'—all that".

#### To Cut a Long Story Short

It was the perfect moment to ask Hadley whether he has more to add to a longer story—something that has not yet been revealed in media—about why he left Spandau Ballet in 2018?

"Well, no. I've kept a very dignified silence on the whole thing, really. I mean, I've been quizzed on breakfast TV in the UK as to what's going on. I resigned for very specific reasons. And, hopefully, one day, they'll be honest and will actually tell the truth as to why I resigned. You know, I'm not going to go into it now. I could do the big exposé and everything else, but I'm not willing to do that. So, yeah, hopefully one day they'll be honest, and they'll say exactly why I left. And it's a very, very specific reason. You don't leave a band like Spandau Ballet because someone put sugar in your tea, and you don't like sugar. It's got to be something quite solid. And it's sad, because the 40th anniversary kicks in on 10 October this year. I'm celebrating 40 years in the business. We're going to do a 40-date show in the UK, finishing in London with a full orchestra."

Hadley is not only looking to the past but also to the future. "We'll be doing a couple of songs from the new album and we're really, really proud of it".

I wanted to know more.

"I've pretty much written the whole album, actually. Some of it's a bit funky, some of it's really anthemic. I love anthemic sort of songs. We're in the process of finishing in-between gigs in

this series. That's always the problem. Trying to do the gigs, trying to see your family, trying to record the album is crazy!"

#### A Matter of Time

The thought of that booming voice on new songs is exciting for fans, like me, who remember the early 1980s when Spandau Ballet—and the other New Romantics—exploded onto the British music scene. I asked Hadley if he realised at that time the impact they would have on music and fashion?

"Well, I think you've got to remember, back in 1978—with the Blitz Club and everything else, and the New Romantic kind of movement that was being spawned at the time—there was no social media like today. Nothing's secret [now], everybody knows your business, you're on social media in the blink of an eye. So it took a while for the whole thing to gather momentum.

Back then, kids really got into the whole scene. And there was Duran Duran, Depeche Mode, The Human League, the whole electronic thing that was happening. And the fashion thing as well. Did I think that in 40 years I'd still be doing this? I hoped so. I'm really blessed and very lucky that I'm still doing it after all these years. And I still love it as well. That's the thing, to get a kick out of it".

I've been quizzed on breakfast TV in the UK as to what's going on. I resigned for very specific reasons.



I wondered whether Hadley thought these things were a uniquely British cultural movement.

"Yeah, it wasn't happening anywhere else. I mean it didn't really take off in America in the same way. But certainly, in the UK, that's where it was happening. And you know what we're like," Hadley added with a laugh. "We love to dress up!"

Does he still have any old Romantic outfits?

"If I've got them, they don't fit. That's for sure!"

#### Nature of the Beast

I mentioned how the early 1980s were an exciting time musically, because of the changing technology and how the studio itself became an instrument to play with, and the fun you could have with that. Hadley agreed.

"It was. But, it was still pretty primitive. Now you go into the studio and, with computers and digitalisation, you can create pretty much anything you want. But back in the day, you were still working with tape. You couldn't just duplicate things in a nanosecond, you had to really work at it. When we were doing 12-inches, we had reels and bits of tape all around the studio. You cut this tape and stuck it to this bit of tape and hoped that it sounded good".

Tony Hadley and Spandau Ballet's music have been sounding good for four decades now, and, like a good conversation, you don't realise the time ticking by. With a knock on the dressing room door our conversation came to an end. Fifteen minutes had turned into 30, which could have easily gone much longer.

Hadley apologised to me. "Sorry. I probably go on a bit. I do go on a bit, but I get excited".

As I headed out the door, he gave me one more quote regarding the power of music.

"It's emotional and it's brilliant. Don't ever get rid of music. As people, we need it!" 🍷

# SHIFTING SOCIETY

“Class-free” Japan follows Britain into multi-social status inequality

BY NORIKO HAMA



I recently reviewed two books on the subject of class and poverty in the UK: *Poverty Safari* by Darren McGarvey and *Social Class in the 21st Century* by Mike Savage and others.

The brilliantly entitled *Poverty Safari* is written in the first person by an author who has, himself, experienced genuine poverty. True to his calling as a rapper as well as writer and social commentator, his style is sharp and rhythmical, his insights real and vivid. The objective of “understanding the anger of Britain’s underclass,” which is the subtitle of this book, is well served by his writing.

*Social Class in the 21st Century* is a more scholarly work by a group of social scientists based on the *The Great British Class Survey* conducted by the BBC. The authors helped design this web survey and analysed the results during 2011–13. The book relates the findings of that research. According to the authors, the UK is now a society consisting of seven classes:

- Elite
- Established middle class
- Technical middle class
- New affluent workers
- Traditional working class
- Emerging service workers
- Precariat

The last is a term concocted by joining “precarious” and “proletariat.” There is a deep chasm between the bottom layer of the precariat and all the rest. The top elite layer is a members’ club strictly inaccessible to non-members. Sandwiched between the top and bottom echelons are the other five classes. The boundaries of these tend to be somewhat blurred. People who look as though they belong firmly in the established middle class may turn out to be new affluent worker types. Those who feel comfortably settled in the technical middle class may suddenly find themselves tumbling down into the emerging

We may not have developed the seven-layered class structure of 21st-century Britain yet ... but I fear we are following closely behind.

service worker layer, having to flit from gig to gig to make a living.

### Shifting society

The two books indicate how complicated and dark an issue class has become in British society. Things were much simpler back in the 1960s, when I was growing up there. We had the upper class, middle class and working class. The lines of demarcation were very clearly defined. Everybody knew where they belonged. The three classes looked at each other over their respective fences in peaceful return.

All this makes me wonder what the class situation is looking like in Japan at present. Reflecting on history, we see that the Edo Period had a firmly and deeply established class structure. There were samurai, farmers, craftsmen and merchants in descending order of status. Modernisation in the Meiji Period did away with the samurai class and Japan became a binary world of aristocracy versus commoners.

Post-war Japan developed into one of the world’s most class-free societies: no upper class, no underclass. We had all become middle class. Or so we thought. Or so it was until around about the turn of the century.

It was in the early few years of this century that books dealing with class issues suddenly started to become bestsellers in Japan. Everybody began to talk about the *karyu-shakai* (low society), the title of one of those bestsellers. People began to question the class-free Japan image.

### Past is prologue

In 2008, *Kani-kosen* (*The Crab Cannery Ship*), a novel written in 1929, became phenomenally popular. It sold more than 500,000 copies—an

unheard-of feat for a classic of this type. The book deals with the plight of workers subjected to totally inhuman exploitation on board a ship which also serves as a factory for canning crabs caught on the northern seas. The author, Takiji Kobayashi, is renowned as the foremost master in the world of proletariat literature. He would have loved the term precariat.

Literary commentators and social scientists marvelled at this novel’s dramatic comeback. Researches made it clear that the book-reading public was empathising very strongly with the fortunes of the hapless crab ship workers.

Indeed, even the normally non-book-reading public was rushing to the bookshops to get a copy. The image of the slave-like situation of those hard labourers had totally caught the imagination of young Japanese working people who were feeling themselves being pushed further and further away from the class-free society into the underclass world of *karyu-shakai*.

Twelve years after the *Kani-kosen* boom, nobody now doubts that class-free Japan is a myth. It has no place in the Japanese psyche anymore. And there is every reason to believe that this change of mentality is well grounded in reality.

What Japanese society suffers from now is what I have taken to call poverty in affluence. Japan as a whole is a very affluent nation. And yet, in the midst of all this wealth, there are pockets of poverty into which people have fallen as a result of an increasingly competitive and hostile economic environment—a situation sure to be exacerbated by Covid-19. We may not have developed the seven-layered class structure of 21st-century Britain yet, and our underclass may not be quite as angry as that of the UK, but I fear we are following closely behind. ❀



# THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

Making and sharing music

BY ROBERT RYKER  
MUSIC DIRECTOR

Public reaction to the coronavirus crisis is seriously eroding not only transport, manufacturing, services and education, but also entertainment and the arts. It is threatening the livelihood of our players and, indeed, the very survival of the Tokyo Sinfonia.

As professional musicians, we choose to face this threat by making and sharing our music—however and wherever we can—for as long as it remains possible.

I sense that the whole world is changing, and hope that, as a result, the world is not deprived of true beauty. We had a splendid response from our recent audience for all three Bizet selections: *Four Bohemian Scenes*, *Symphony in C Major* and *Symphony in C Minor (Roma)*. We had a few additional ticket sales at the door, and wound up with a paid audience filling about a quarter of the hall.

When our special guest asked, “How many of you are classical music fans?”, only half a dozen hands went up. Attracted by the popularity of our special guest, who himself was also new to classical music, 90% of our audience indicated they were attending a classical concert for the first time. We received many completed questionnaires after the concert. Especially as such a large proportion of the responders were writing of their first experience attending a concert of classical music, the comments were not only delightful to read but also highly useful. Everybody was happy after the concert, including the orchestra players, our staff, our special guest, his management, our producer, their staff and the staff of the hall.

Our recent performance in Oji Hall was the only one presented in that wonderful venue during the entire month of March. We also may well be the only performance there in April, but—unless someone in the Tokyo Sinfonia falls ill—we’ll be there.

Several of my players have asked about our April programme, quite correctly wondering about our guest artist, an absolutely splendid German soprano recommended to me by the Berlin Philharmonic. I must speak with her soon before I make a decision on this, but obviously there may be serious issues to resolve both here and there.

My best to all ACUMEN staff and readers. 🍀



## Tickets for upcoming performances:

### Oji Hall (Ginza)

22 April, 17 June, 15 July, 16 September,  
28 October, 16 December

### Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan

22 May, 7 August, 13 November; 15 February, 2021

### Takasaki City Theatre

16 June

### The Embassy of Mexico in Tokyo, Japan

3 July

### The Tokyo Masonic Center

23–24 January, 2021

[www.tokyosinfonia.com](http://www.tokyosinfonia.com)

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ROBERT RYKER conducts  
TOKYO SINFONIA

**TCHAIKOVSKY**

チャイコフスキー

2020.4.22<sup>19:00</sup>  
(水)

銀座 王子ホール Oji Hall (Ginza)

# ARTS

## UK CULTURE IN JAPAN

COMPILED BY:

MEGAN CASSON  
megan@custom-media.com

MISA YASHIRO  
coordinator@custom-media.com

### 1 7-26 APRIL

#### *Violet*

A multi-award-winning musical based on Doris Betts' short story "The Ugliest Pilgrim". This joint production by the Charing Cross Theatre and the Umeda Arts Theater received good reviews for the performances held at the Charing Cross Theatre, London, between January and April 2019. Performances by a Japanese cast will be held in Tokyo in April.

#### Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre

1-8-1 Nishiikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 171-0021

Price: ¥12,000

[www.umegei.com/violet](http://www.umegei.com/violet)



### 2 13 APRIL

#### *Yuki Ito Cello Recital*

Recipient of the 2018 Hideo Saito Memorial Fund Award—one of Japan's highest awards for cellists and conductors—Yuki Ito has had a widely successful career. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestras such as the Philharmonic Orchestra and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, and has performed with artists such as pianist and conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy as well as composer and conductor Kenichiro Kobayashi. Part of the Spring Festival in Tokyo.

PHOTO: CHARLOTTE FIELDING

#### Ishibashi Memorial Hall

4-24-12 Higashi-ueno, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-8642

Price: ¥2,500-4,000

03-6743-1398 | [www.tokyo-harusai.com](http://www.tokyo-harusai.com)



### 3 17-23 APRIL

#### *Small Island*

Helen Edmundson's stage adaptation of British author Andrea Levy's book *Small Island*—featuring a company of 40 actors—is coming to Japan. Exploring the history of Jamaica and the UK during World War II, three stories intertwine in this critically praised play. Hortense yearns for a new life away from rural Jamaica, Gilbert dreams of becoming a lawyer and Queenie longs to escape her Lincolnshire roots.

PHOTO: BRINKHOFF MOEGENBURG

#### TOHO Cinemas Nihonbashi

2-3-1 Nihonbashimuromachi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103-0022

#### Cine Libre, Ikebukuro

1-11-1 Nishiikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 171-0021

Price: ¥2,500-3,000

[www.ntlive.jp](http://www.ntlive.jp)







**To apply for giveaways**, please send an email with your name, address and telephone number to: [coordinator@custom-media.com](mailto:coordinator@custom-media.com)  
Winners will be picked at random.

**Please note that, due to the Covid-19 coronavirus, events are subject to postponement or cancellation.**



**4**  
**28 APRIL**

**007 Skyfall in Concert**

Enjoy Thomas Newman's Academy Award-winning soundtrack from the 2012 instalment of the James Bond franchise, *Skyfall*. Immerse yourself in the film as the soundtrack is performed live by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra while the action unfolds on the big screen.

PHOTO: SKYFALL LICENSED BY MGM. SKYFALL © 2012 DANJAG & MGM. SKYFALL, 007 AND RELATED JAMES BOND

**Tokyo International Forum**

3-5-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-0005

Price: ¥3,900-9,900

0570-550-799 | <https://007concert-japan.com>

**5**  
**UNTIL 14 JUNE**

**Peter Doig**

This is the first solo exhibition in Japan by contemporary Scottish painter Peter Doig, who has been called one of the most important artists in the world today. Inviting viewers on a journey of the imagination through painting, this exhibition covers the artist's career from his early work to the latest masterpieces.

PHOTO: ©PETER DOIG. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK. GIFT OF ANNA MARIE AND ROBERT F. SHAPIRO IN HONOR OF KYNASTON MCSHINE, 2004. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, DACS & JASPAR 2020 C3120, 2004 OIL ON CANVAS 200 X 250.5 CM

**The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo**

3-1 Kitanomaru-koen, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8322

Price: ¥1,700

03-5777-8600 | <https://peterdoig-2020.jp/en>

**6**  
**UNTIL 14 JUNE**

**Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London**

For the first time in 200 years, the National Gallery, London, is allowing some of the works in its collection to be exhibited abroad. This collection of masterpieces represents an extremely rare opportunity to see 61 important works, such as Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, Johannes Vermeer's *A Young Woman Seated at the Virginals* and Rembrandt's *Self Portrait at the Age of 34*.

PHOTO: ©THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. BOUGHT, 1927

**The National Museum of Western Art**

7-7 Ueno-koen, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-0007

Price: ¥1,700

03-5777-8600 | [www.nmwa.go.jp/en/exhibitions](http://www.nmwa.go.jp/en/exhibitions)

🕒 **FREE TICKETS:** We have **five pairs of free tickets** for this event.





## UK-JAPAN EVENTS

**1**  
The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) and PechaKucha teamed up on 20 February at the Core Kitchen/Space in Shinbashi, Minato Ward, to mark International PechaKucha Day with the interactive event Techs in the City. PechaKucha is a 400-second visual format in which 20 slides are presented for 20 seconds each.

**2**  
BCCJ Associate Director Sarah Backley welcomes members and guests to the Techs in the City event on 20 February. Presenters used the PechaKucha 20x20 method to present their efforts in tackling some of the 21st century's greatest challenges.

**3**  
Sean Ellison, senior economist for Asia-Pacific at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), spoke at the BCCJ event Global Commercial Property Monitor with RICS: Where Should You Be Doing Your Next Deal? on 27 February at Roppongi Hills Club.

**4**  
From left: GlobalTreehouse Inc. Representative Director & Deputy President COO Tom Pedersen and a member of his team, deVere Acuma K.K. Business Development Manager Yukari Yabugaki and Area Manager Adrian Rowles, and Custom Media President Robert Heldt with ACUMEN Publisher Simon Farrell at the Team GB Tokyo 2020 Pre-Olympic Build-up event 4 March at AoyamaTreehouse, which will serve as the Team GB House during the Games (page 8).





**5**  
On 14 February, British School in Tokyo (BST) Year 3 School Council members delivered ¥232,000 that BST raised at the Funky Sock Day on 31 January to the office of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Japan for the Australia Bushfire emergency campaign.

**6**  
Over half term holidays, on 17 February, BST secondary students had a Geography trip to the Metropolitan Area Outer Underground Discharge Channel—also known as Tokyo’s Flood Tunnels—the world’s largest such infrastructure. Located in Kasukabe, Saitama Prefecture, this facility helps protect the Kanto Plain.

**7**  
The BST parent-teacher association had a successful Valentine’s Bake Sale on 11 February.

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

# JAPAN'S BEST OF BREED

Crufts gongs for Chin, Spitz, Shiba and Akita

BY SIMON FARRELL | PHOTOS BY CRUFTS



Since 1891, Crufts has drawn adorable pooches and serious dog lovers from around the world. Officially “The Largest Dog Show in the World,” the annual canine awards and exhibition is organised by the Kennel Club. This year, Japanese breeds were among more than 21,000 dogs that competed on 5–8 March at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, with six winning coveted Best of Breed titles on the first day.

**1&2**

Known for their squint and link to Japanese nobility, these Chin lap dogs won, owned by Alex Pailidscon (left) and Alex Forth.

**3**

The playful companion-dog Spitz is a cousin of the Pomeranian.

**4**

Nicknamed Samurai by owner Michaela Dunhill-Paul, the Shiba Inu breed is said to be alert, charming and fearless.

**5**

Owned by Amonova Milana, the hardy Akita Inu breed comes from the rugged mountains of Northern Japan.

**6**

Alistair Taylor (left) celebrated with his toy-breed Chin (Japanese Spaniel) as brother Arran proudly held his British Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, which also won Best of Breed.



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