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ACQUAINTANCE

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INNOVATION
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GREAT BRITISH PRODUCTS

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TRADE:

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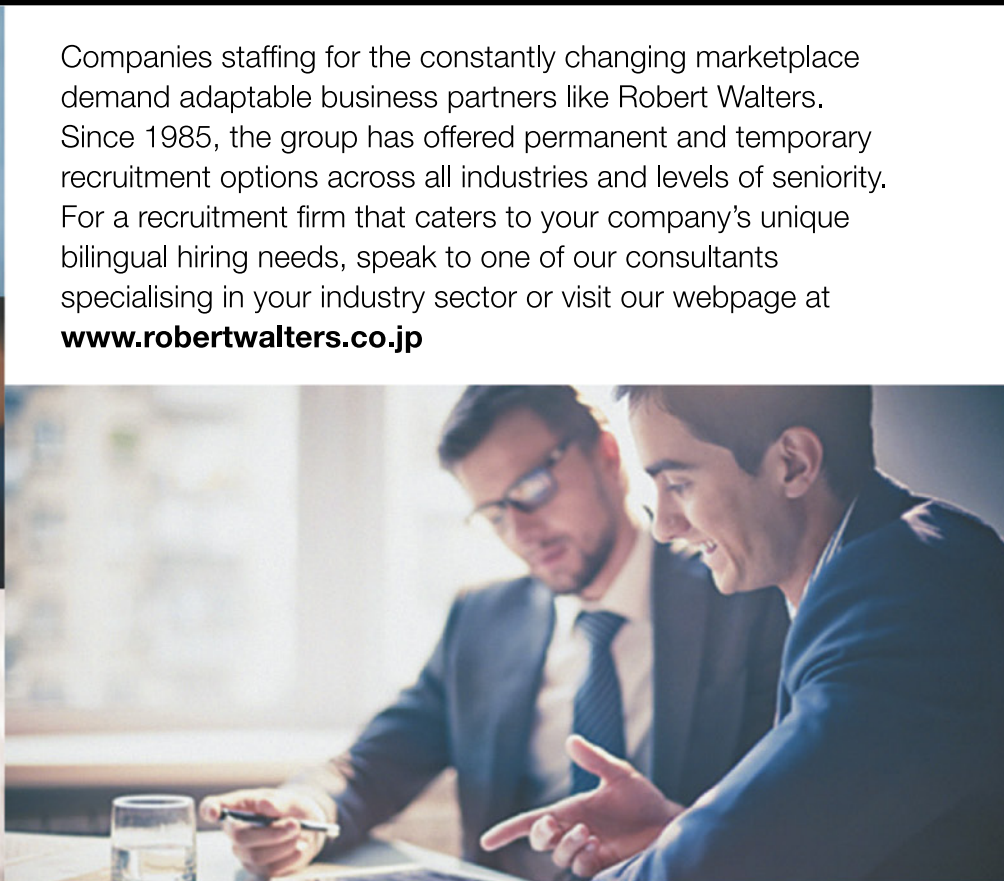
How the UK cut a £4 billion trade deficit with Japan into a level playing field of £25 billion in bilateral business

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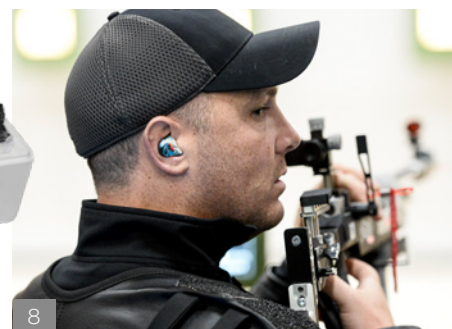
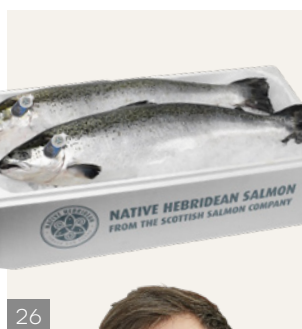
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BCCJ highlights local businesses and tourism

MEGAN CASSON





The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan

BCCJ MISSION

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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/BCCJ Company Page



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Para aims high

War veteran turns tragedy into opportunity

SIMON FARRELL | simon@custom-media.com

If you're looking for a familiar name to cheer at the 2020 Tokyo Summer Paralympic Games, from 24 August to 5 September, you could try shooter Phillip Eaglesham. His inspiring story is one of bravery, tragedy and recovery, but also of the innovative people and organisations that helped him become a leading Paralympian and successful entrepreneur.

Just days before the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games' opening ceremony, Devon-based engineering and design company SC Innovation reached out. With an expert engineering and mechanical team well-known for bringing design concepts to life, they needed a competent bilingual engineer on the ground

in Tokyo in the unlikely event that the powered wheelchair they had helped innovate for Eaglesham needed repair or maintenance. The challenges were language and the state of emergency that barred from the secure Olympic areas all but long-ago-accredited officials, media members and athletes.

Originally from Dungannon, Northern Ireland, Eaglesham is a 39-year-old father-of-three who now lives in south-west England. As a Royal Marines commando, he contracted Q fever—also known as Helmand fever—during active service in Afghanistan. A 2010 attack involving an improvised explosive device eventually put him in a wheelchair for life. As his physical and mental health declined, he started to look for a new mission on

civvy street, and quickly identified multiple issues with mobility devices. They looked old, had dated technologies and did not work for his generation. A lack of development was stigmatising users.

In 2015, he set up Conquering Horizons Limited in Taunton—with his wife Julie and business partner Brian Meaden—his goal being to create a mobility device for the modern world. In the same year, he began shooting as a Paralympic sportsman. With SC Innovation and the University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, the veteran designed, created a prototype for, and produced a wheelchair capable of much more than a traditional one. SC Innovation—part of SC Group which supplies the UK Ministry of Defence with the Supacat high-mobility military vehicles—won the 2017 Queen's Award for International Trade for Outstanding Short Term Growth.

Eaglesham called his brainchild Victor. It features a powered arm to raise users to what he calls a social height; multi-directional all-terrain omni wheels; steering with the ability to spin on the spot; and a cool design. The adjustable independent suspension ensures a plush ride, helping Victor comfortably traverse curbs up to 125mm. The four-wheel drive Victor can be used indoors or outdoors and moves quickly and silently over various terrain.

The Royal Marines Charity gave Eaglesham £60,000 to design a concept. Victor was launched at the Imperial War Museum in London in 2016, with Crowd Cube raising some £700,000 from more than 500 investors to fund a working mechanical prototype.

The biggest challenge was creating an attractive mobility device that fell within strict government rules. As Eaglesham explains: "To design a device



PHOTO: INTERNATIONAL PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

Eaglesham won bronze at the Sydney 2019 World Shooting Para Championships.

As his physical and mental health declined, he started to look for a new mission on civvy street, and quickly identified multiple issues with mobility devices.

which able-bodied people deem as cool and would use themselves shifts the dynamic. It means disabled users don't feel like second-class citizens. In the short period I have been using Victor, it has completely changed my life. It has given me an enormous amount of independence".

Victor has no unsightly adjustable footplates, locking knobs or sliding clamps, and it doesn't ask the environment to adapt to the user—it adapts to the environment around it. In 2018, the prototype was awarded the Alex Moulton Award for product innovation at the Institution of Engineering Designers Awards, with judges noting the "application of insight". Victor is now in the final stages of production concept development at SC Innovation.

Unlike the 2019 Rugby World Cup—when the Irish team represented both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in a "one island, one Ireland" policy—athletes from Northern Ireland can compete at the Games for either Paralympics GB or Paralympics Ireland. Eaglesham chose Team Ireland and qualified for Para shooting in the SH2



class, for athletes with a more severe impairment in the upper limbs that requires them to use a "shooting stand".

And the bilingual engineer with security clearance? After exhausting our list of industry contacts, I asked the British Embassy Tokyo Global Sports Team who suggested a couple of likely candidates already ensconced in the tight Paralympic bubble. 🇬🇧



Olympian task

For fans of logistics and quirky statistics, here are some numbers from Team GB:

The kitting out event at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham saw 29 sports passing through over 21 days. It welcomed 21 articulated lorries and unloaded 400 pallets containing about 100,000 items of adidas teamwear, which was then arranged according to gender and size for the athletes.

The team went out in waves and will return in waves, with flights over 28 days until 9 August, with staff following after.

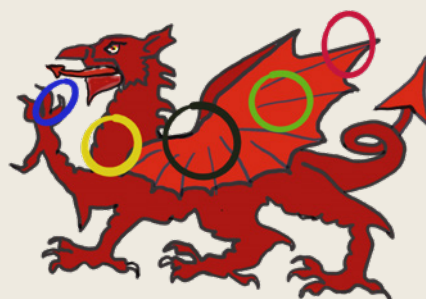
Travelling to Tokyo:

- 375 athletes (+ 22 reserves)
- More than 500 support staff, including mechanics, horse grooms, boatmen
- 30 containers
- About 550 pallets
- 28 Union Flag deckchairs
- One giant Connect 4 and one giant Jenga
- 77 packs of Union Jack playing cards
- 80 Union Jack rugs
- 253 Pride the Lion soft toys
- 500 door wedges
- 600 Dreams mattress toppers
- 132 DFS sofas
- 35 boxes of Jelly Babies
- 40,000 tea bags
- One red telephone box



All Welsh Athletes & Team GB WELCOME * CROESO * YOKOSO From the St David's Society Japan

Though we cannot organise in-person events as we did during the 2019 Rugby World Cup, the St David's Society is cheering on Welsh athletes and Team GB as your greatest fans in Japan!



MEDIA

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POULTRY GAINS IMPORT ACCESS

The UK’s Department of International Trade revealed that Britain has secured market access to import poultry meat, in an agreement estimated to be worth up to £13 million per year, according to a 16 June article in *The Japan Times*. Japan is renowned for strict food safety and import control, and this market opening is the result of extensive negotiations between the UK and Japan over the past four years.

“The Japanese market will now be able to enjoy more of our unique produce, adding to an already varied collection of UK food, such as pork, beef and lamb, already available to its customers”, said British Food Minister Victoria Prentis.

“We are working hard to open new markets for our agri-food business, and this is a significant opportunity for the UK poultry sector. The market opening follows a series of complex negotiations over the last four years between the UK and Japanese officials to agree on specific animal health requirements”, Prentis added. “Benefits of this development will be felt across the supply chain throughout the UK and will open up new opportunities for British farmers”.

UK Minister for International Trade Ranil Jayawardena said: “This is fantastic news for farmers and food producers across the whole of the United Kingdom who can now take advantage of this new market and export poultry meat to Japan—the world’s third largest economy—for the first time”.



WELSH CHEESE CERTIFIED ORGANIC

The Welsh farming cooperative Calon Wen have recently become the first European brand to be certified organic by the Japanese government.

A 6 July article in *DairyReporter* said the cooperative has been exporting products to Asia since 2017, with the aid of the Mineichi Group.

Stuart McNally, business development and sales manager at Calon Wen, said: “Our future plans include expanding stockists to over 120 stores in Japan within 2021, introducing new products of Calon Wen to strengthen the brand and introducing other Welsh brands and products in partnership. For example, Tan y Castell Welsh Cakes and much more”.

Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd, Lesley Griffiths, said: “Securing new export markets, as well as maintaining and building on current ones, is crucial for the future prosperity of the Welsh food and drink industry.

“Japan has a population of 127mn, and is one of the wealthiest and more mature consumer markets in the world. Food and beverage is the largest expenditure for Japanese households and the country relies on food imports to satisfy consumer demand”.



UDON CHAIN FOR LONDON

Famous Japanese noodle restaurant chain sanuki udon has arrived in London, according to a 27 July article in *The Japan Times*. Marugame Seimen Inc., operator of sanuki udon and subsidiary of restaurant chain operator Toridoll Holdings Corp., opened the eatery on 26 July at the City financial centre.

Toridoll executive Takashi Sugiyama said: “Now is a good time to open a restaurant [in Britain] as Covid-19 restrictions in the country have been eased substantially. We expect to see a recovery in demand for dining out”.

NEWS BRIEFS



NISSAN BOOSTS EV OUTPUT

Nissan Motor Company, Ltd., is boosting its electric vehicle operations in Britain, as was revealed in an article posted on 2 July on *NHK WORLD-JAPAN*. The company is teaming up with partners to spend more than £1 billion to boost output, as well as begin construction on a huge battery plant. Nissan’s new EV model will be produced in its Sunderland, England, factory.

MOD: MORE TALKS ON AERO ENGINES

The Japanese Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced on 20 July that London and Tokyo will speed up talks regarding the joint development of aero-engine technologies, in a bid to support future aircraft programmes in the two countries, after a meeting between UK Defence Minister Ben Wallace and Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi.

According to the 21 July article on defence news website *Janes*, the MoD said: “Both ministers agreed to intensify efforts toward a bilateral arrangement between both ministries that is necessary for implementing that collaboration of power and propulsion systems if it is agreed to be conducted”.

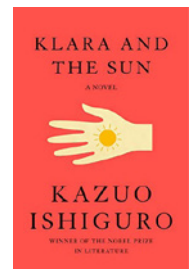
TV: EAST MEETS WEST

According to a 20 July article posted to online Hollywood news site *Deadline*, Japanese entertainment company Nippon TV has partnered with London-based media outfit Envision Entertainment. The first collaboration will be a series inspired by the show *Double Booking*—a hit in Japan.

Future programmes will share Eastern and Western sensibilities, and be filmed primarily in English, making the works watchable for a global audience.

ISHIGURO LISTED FOR BOOKER PRIZE

Japan-born British author Kazuo Ishiguro has been longlisted for this year’s Booker Prize for his eighth novel, *Klara and the Sun*. The author previously won the award in 1989. (28 July, *BBC*)



SAMURAI GIFT FOR OLYMPICS

A group of Japanese artists are creating samurai for all of the competing countries in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, including a UK samurai, and a Welsh samurai called Gigs. (23 July, *Nation Cymru*)



BRITISH MUSEUM SHOWS HOKUSAI

The British Museum, London, will begin showing 100 picture postcard-sized Hokusai drawings from 30 September to 30 January 2022. It is the first time the works will be on display in two centuries. (20 July, *The Guardian*)

RUGBY STAR MOVES TO JAPAN

Northampton Saints rugby star, 25-year-old Harry Mallinder, will be leaving his current club with immediate effect, to begin playing in Japan ahead of the 2021/22 season. (22 July, *Ruck*)



With the new UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement set to strengthen bilateral trade between the two countries, *BCCJ ACUMEN* is introducing a new section to showcase the high quality and diverse UK brands available in Japan. If you would like to be included in this, please contact acumen@custom-media.com



NYETIMBER ROSÉ

nyetimber.jp #Nyetimber #PerfectlyBritish

What better way to enjoy the heat of summer than with a delicious sparkling wine? Nyetimber's Multi-Vintage Rosé is the perfect beverage for summer afternoons, bringing a touch of English elegance to picnics, celebrations or even just casual drinks at home. And it is the perfect complement for Japanese food! If you're looking for a drink to go with a fresh seafood dish, then Nyetimber's Classic Cuvee is also highly recommended.

JAIPUR BEER

thornbridgebrewery.co.uk

One of Thornbridge Brewery's first brews and long-term flagship products is Jaipur, a 5.9 percent IPA packed with a bunch of American hops. At the time of release in 2005, there was nothing like this in the UK beer market, and following an array of awards and national recognition, Jaipur catapulted Thornbridge into the spotlight.

📍 Thornbridge Beer is now available to purchase on Amazon and Rakuten, at supermarkets such as Seijo Ishii, and local liquor shops like Yamaya.





MOLTON BROWN
RE-CHARGE BLACK PEPPER

moltonbrown.co.jp

Molton Brown is proud to celebrate its 50th anniversary with signature fragrances. Re-charge Black Pepper, one of the brand’s most iconic scents, has garnered many industry awards over the years. Created in 2002 by master perfumer Jacques Chabert, it is an enticing medley of black pepper and ginger, with an herbaceous, aromatic heart and a confident, earthy base. Molton Brown’s collection includes perfumes as well as bath, body, hand and home fragrances.

THE SCOTTISH SALMON COMPANY

scottishsalmon.com

In 1992 Scottish Salmon was the first fish product to be awarded the Label Rouge quality mark. In 2018 The Scottish Salmon Company developed the Tartan Salmon, a Label Rouge fillet specially modified for the Japanese market—perfect for sashimi!

The premium ‘Tartan Salmon’ fillet is impressive and of the highest standard, having to pass the company’s strict criteria, as well as Scottish Salmon’s ‘Hand & Eye’ check before final packing.

The Tartan Salmon fillet is now available to customers in Japan!

For more information, contact hirokawasaki@scottishsalmon.com



LOTUS EMIRA

lotuscars.com

Lotus don't release new models very often, but when they do, it's a big deal. The all-new Lotus Emira, unveiled last month at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, sticks to the company's mantra of great, lightweight performance. It is also a continuation of the company's collaboration with Toyota. Customers can choose between a supercharged V6 from the Japanese giant, or a new turbocharged 4-pot from the Mercedes race division, Mercedes-AMG.



BRITISH MARKET

BCCJ displays member firms' products at Tokyo event

BY MEGAN CASSON

On Sunday 20 June, the BCCJ team was out in force, presenting a fantastic selection of products provided by BCCJ member firms at The British Market in Minami-aoyama. The market is a monthly event, held at the Minami-aoyama Playhouse at which Vulcanize London showcases the best of British food and drink.

The British Market is organised by Vulcanize London, a Tokyo-based shop that displays and sells products from a variety of British brands, such as:

- Globe-Trotter
- Smythson Ltd
- Fox Umbrellas Ltd
- Hackett Ltd
- Turnbull & Asser
- N. Peal London
- Gieves & Hawkes
- Goat
- Johnstons of Elgin
- Molton Brown
- Nyetimber

Founded in 2002 under the name Vulcanize, the shop name was changed to Vulcanize London to highlight its connection with British brands. In October 2020 the refurbished Minami-Aoyama venue reopened as Vulcanize London @ The Playhouse.

The clothing shop is also a hub of British culture, offering a multitude of services and events. The Vulcanize Academy, for example, has a number of specialists who, familiar with British



culture, serve as instructors. Daily cultural events, such as calligraphy or flower arranging classes, are available. Vulcanize Works is a service that offers repairs, maintenance and customisation of British items such as shoes, watches, accessories and cars.


Akihiko Ban, a Vulcanize London representative, spoke to *BCCJ ACUMEN* about the event and its plans for the future. "This event takes place once a month, and is growing. On Valentine's Day and White Day this year, we welcomed between 800 and 1,000 guests a day, with a wide variety of

The market ... showcases the best of British food and drink.

British brands on display. Bakeries such as Swan & Lion, Unicorn Bakery, Malins Fish & Chips, and many beer, cider and tea brands are especially well received.

"We are planning to have Scottish smoked salmon, English smoothie brands, scotch whisky, gin, and British cheeses in the near future".

Vulcanize London will be holding multiple events throughout the rest of the year. They are scheduled for 29 August, 19 September, 17 October, 21 November and 12 December.

A special thank you to all members who dropped by, and to Whisk-e Limited, Swan & Lion, Camping with Soul, Suki Tea and Phoenix House International School for their contributions. If any firms are interested in setting up their own booth or joining the BCCJ's please contact: info@bccjapan.com 



Into new terrain

LORI HENDERSON MBE

The BCCJ is proud to be embarking upon a new and inclusive journey towards achieving equity in the workplace.

We are transforming our diversity and inclusion (D&I) pillar into diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The addition of equity is important. Equity is crucial in ensuring that processes and programmes are impartial, fair and provide equal possible outcomes for every individual.

Led by our DEI taskforce, our DEI programme will strive to promote and provide support mechanisms for the following diverse groups in the workforce, in alphabetical order:

- Cognitively Diverse (added in 2021)
- Generation Y / Millennials
- The LGBTQ Community
- People with Disabilities
- Race / Nationality / Ethnicity (added in 2021)
- Women

To share DEI updates from your organisation please email: info@bccjapan.com

Tohoku Week thanks

We hope you enjoyed Tohoku Week (12–16 July)—a first for the BCCJ. Throughout the week we highlighted local businesses and tourism in the three prefectures most acutely affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami of 11 March 2011—Miyagi, Iwate, and Fukushima.

Tohoku Week invited you to connect with the stories of local people who continue to work hard to rebuild their lives, livelihoods, and local communities. It also presented simple ways for you—or your company—to engage with and support locally driven projects.

Honourable mention goes to Ishinomaki-based BCCJ member Kyoko Sasaki for her video tour around restaurants and other spots in her local area. Many thanks also go to Her Majesty's Ambassador to Japan, Julia Longbottom CMG; Director of the British Council in Japan Matt Knowles; and HM Consul in Japan Martin O'Neill MBE for their contributions. Thank you to all friends and colleagues in the Tohoku region for their online updates.

BBA2021

I'm looking forward to seeing what the team can do to innovate and deliver this year's hybrid gala. It will be streamed from an exciting Tokyo location on the evening of 5 November. This year's BBA theme is Transform the Norm, and we are pleased to confirm the following nomination categories:

- Company of the Year
- Entrepreneur of the Year
- UK-Japan Partnership
- Responsible Business
- Digital-Tech Innovation
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

The relocation sits in line with our chamber strategy

The BBA2021 nomination period will begin on 1 August. Further details can be found on the chamber website.

We moved

As of 1 July, we are sharing office space with long-term BCCJ Platinum member and British multinational luxury automotive company, Jaguar Land Rover Japan (page 39).

The relocation sits in line with our chamber strategy to grow as an innovation hub, while supporting our office team to operate in ever more flexible and creative ways, beyond Covid-19. Whilst continuing to work mainly from home, we've also taken up residence in JLR's F-TYPE room, amid the open and collaborative workspaces at the company's Japan HQ in Shinagawa, Tokyo. We could not be more grateful!

Vaccinations

The BCCJ have been providing members and their families with access to vaccinations since 22 June. At the time of writing, the BCCJ vaccination accelerator programme has reached more than 1,200 patients. The total number of patients helped through our joint international chamber's coalition is over 3,000.

To read more visit: www.bccjapan.com

NEIGHBORHOODS [in] Japan

Another Side of Tokyo

In the first of a three-part series, In Japan TV explores the increasingly popular **East Area of Tokyo Station (EATS)** neighborhoods. This installment takes a look at iki, a café and restaurant business run by a husband and wife duo. It's located in the trendy Kiyosumi-shirakawa neighborhood, which was once called "the Venice of Tokyo."

www.injapantv.com



[in] Japan tv



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And so the Games begin

DAVID BICKLE OBE | @BCCJ_President

The summer months (in the northern hemisphere) of 2012 and 2013 are forever etched into my sporting memory. These were the dates of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the British & Irish Lions rugby tour to Australia, which culminated in a series-deciding test match in Sydney. I was fortunate to attend both. While memories of the sporting action are increasingly sketchy, I vividly remember the atmosphere of pride and excitement that radiated from these two great cities as they welcomed visitors from around the world for their respective sporting spectacles.

Changing expectations

These are experiences to be savoured for a lifetime and I thought destined to be repeated in 2020 and 2021 with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the British & Irish Lions tour to South Africa. In the case of the Games, the extraordinarily successful 2019 Rugby World Cup (RWC) merely reinforced our confidence that Tokyo would deliver a very special experience for the world to enjoy.

Since then, however, the global pandemic has caused the stage to be set very differently. Covid-19 shunted the Games from 2020 into 2021 and, like the Lions' rugby matches in South Africa, the Games are now taking place behind closed doors. For Japan in particular—given the sheer scale of the Games

The commitment of competitors can, in some small way, distract and nourish the resolve of pandemic-weary people.

in terms of the number of athletes, venues and administrators involved—the stakes (in terms of public health) are infinitely higher than anything we will see play out in competition on our television screens over the coming weeks.

Ever since the announcement in September 2013 that Tokyo had won the right to host the Games, the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) has organised numerous events to explore their social and commercial impact. Following the UK's recent experiences of hosting the Games and RWC, this was in large part due to a desire to celebrate the joy and opportunity of a shared experience for the people and businesses of Japan and the UK. When it came to opportunities, one of the recurring themes was how businesses and communities in the host country could leverage the “feel good factor” to impact people in a positive way.

Finding hope

Formerly, that feel good factor was a function of a jamboree atmosphere and the inspirational performances of athletes of extraordinary skill and

capability. However, with the struggle to contain the pandemic, the moral licence and emotional tolerance for festival-like celebration has faded.

Yet the Games are here, so let us hope that the commitment of competitors can, in some small way, distract and nourish the resolve of pandemic-weary people around the world. Driven to excel by the prestige of participation, the honour of representing their countries, and pride in individual excellence and collective teamwork, athletes will undoubtedly deliver the drama.

But perhaps the most inspiring chapter of these Games has already been written by 21-year-old Japanese swimmer Rikako Ikee, who qualified after spending 10 months hospitalised in 2019 receiving treatment for leukaemia. As she reminded us before the Games, “Sport is about more than just the athletes. It takes the support of many different people [and] inspires courage and solidarity. To overcome adversity, what we need most of all is hope.” Courage, solidarity, and hope—inspirational words. Her actions, though, speak even louder. 🇯🇵

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CUTTING EDGE

Belfast and Tokyo join forces on computing research

BY MEGAN CASSON

Computing and the internet have developed rapidly over the years, and for some time now users have been heavily reliant on cloud computing, the on-demand availability of computing services, and data provided through data storage centres on the internet. As technology continues to develop, edge computing has placed its foot firmly in the running to becoming the primary technological architecture.

Edge computing is done at or near the source of the data. It is a distributed framework that brings services and data closer together, increasing speed and saving on bandwidth.

Future in tech

Dr Blesson Varghese—a lecturer in the School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and a fellow of the Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT) at Queen's University Belfast—explains on an Edge Computing Hub website: “We are at a pivotal moment in technology. The billions of devices already connected to the internet are collecting data en masse across the world, and sending it to the cloud for processing—whether that is your steps per day from your smart watch, photos taken on your smart phone, or the exact location needed for playing an online game on your phone.

“The reality is, current infrastructure will not be able to keep up in the future without significantly impacting the quality of service we expect from telecom or cloud service providers”.

Varghese explained how edge computing can improve the development of computing technology. “Currently, processing of all data we generate usually happens on geographically distant clouds. As billions of devices are getting connected to the internet, we need more sustainable and scalable architectures for computing. They must not solely rely on distant centralised clouds.

Edge computing will bring certain services of applications closer to the users on the edge of the network. This will make applications more responsive, reducing bandwidth demand in the network core”.



Dr Blesson Varghese (second from right): “Edge computing is vital if we are to ensure the internet’s future efficiency”.

As billions of devices are getting connected to the internet, we need more sustainable and scalable architectures for computing.

Edge Computing Hub

ECIT and the School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Queen's opened the Edge Computing Hub on 20 May, in a new research partnership with Rakuten Mobile Inc., a subsidiary of Rakuten Group, Inc. The hub aims to tackle some of the key challenges involved in moving data processing away from the cloud to the edge of the network.

Varghese commented on the prospects of the partnership. “In a society where we rely heavily on gadgets and apps for everyday activities”, he said, “edge computing is vital if we are to ensure the internet’s future efficiency. This academia-industry collaboration will allow Queen’s and Rakuten Mobile to develop cutting-edge research and lead the area”.

Dr Pierre Imai, head of research and innovation at Rakuten Mobile, explained that: “Rakuten Mobile aims to be the most technologically advanced telecommunications provider in the world. To achieve this, we have established a new lab to make a truly autonomous network a reality.

“Through our collaboration with Queen’s University Belfast, we have the opportunity to work with leading researchers in the edge computing field, and the results should allow us to provide a better service and a greater level of convenience to our customers”.

Miro Salem, global head of AI and Autonomous Networks at Rakuten Mobile, Inc., has outlined how Rakuten Mobile is investing in the partnership. “Edge computing is a new technology and platform that offers great potential for the future and shows tangible benefits in our network today.

“In this collaboration, Rakuten Mobile is funding PhD students and a post-doctoral researcher at Queen’s University Belfast to investigate edge computing under Dr Blesson Varghese’s direction. To us, a collaboration goes beyond financial investment—it is a partnership between Rakuten Mobile’s research scientists and the team at Queen’s University Belfast. Together they will combine a state-of-the-art network with state-of-the-art research. We are proud to be supporting the Edge Computing Hub from the very beginning”.

“Edge computing is a new technology and platform that offers great potential for the future and shows tangible benefits in our network today”

Northern Irish investment

Providing support and communication between the two parties is Northern Ireland’s regional economic development agency, Invest in Northern Ireland (Invest NI).

This is not the first time Invest NI has shown support for Rakuten Group Inc. In 2017, Invest NI supported its Belfast-based Blockchain Lab.

Now, as the Edge Computing Hub begins its research and development (R&D), Japanese investment in Northern Ireland is strengthening.

Mark Graham, Invest NI regional director for North East Asia, said: “It has been a pleasure to work with my colleagues at Rakuten Mobile and is a huge source of pride that this digital giant has chosen Northern Ireland as home for its Edge Computing Hub at Queen’s University Belfast. It is, in every way, the perfect example of collaboration. Rakuten Mobile is the epitome of forward-thinking global innovation, a communication pioneer that has bettering the status quo at the heart of its ethos. Queen’s University Belfast not only has the history and pedigree of a world-class Russell Group University, but offers world-class education and research, focused on the needs of society. And, of course, the transformation of industry in Northern Ireland in the past 15 years—which has resulted in a tech-focused economy, boasting expertise in data solutions, AI, cyber security, medtech and fintech—all makes this the ideal fit”. 🌟

Invest Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland’s regional economic development agency, Invest NI, is a non-departmental public body of the Department for the Economy, and its goal is to attract new investment to Northern Ireland by helping new and existing businesses to compete internationally. The agency encourages and supports firms from around the world that wish to enter Northern Ireland. It provides enterprises with strong government support by effectively carrying out the government’s economic development strategies.

Invest NI offers impressive financial incentives to Japanese firms seeking to set up operations in Northern Ireland, as well as provides an ecosystem of sector clusters, supply R&D support, and offers programmes to ensure that the exact skills required by investors are available.

Invest NI also offers funding support to businesses seeking to undertake R&D projects. The funding can help plan, develop and test ideas, build and test a prototype, or secure intellectual property.

Mark Graham, based in Tokyo, is the Invest NI regional director for North East Asia, covering

Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. “In the past year alone we have worked with big hitters such as Rakuten Group, Rakuten Mobile, Fujitsu and Kyocera, as well as a host of Japanese scale-ups to support their investment goals in Northern Ireland as a leading location for inward investment while providing access to European markets. The recognition of Northern Ireland as a well-connected, high-value proposition with a wealth of talent has really gathered pace”. The Invest Northern Ireland team in Tokyo also support an ever-growing number of Northern Ireland companies seeking to enter or expand in the region, particularly in tech and advanced manufacturing and engineering.



Rakuten and Queen's University Belfast teams working together remotely



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Getting Results Without Authority	1 hr
How to Win Friends & Influence Business People (4 sessions)	12 hrs
Managing Workplace Stress	3 hrs
Overcoming Workplace Negativity with Enthusiasm	2 hrs
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THEM AND US

UK media call for end to Tokyo's cliquey *kisha* clubs

BY JULIAN RYALL



More than four years after a report by a United Nations Special Rapporteur expressed concern about press freedoms in Japan—with the system of *kisha* clubs (reporters clubs) singled out for particular censure—critics say little has changed.

All governments strive to influence the messages that appear on its citizens television screens or the pages of its newspapers, but the May 2017 report by David Kaye to the UN Human Rights Council was withering in its assessment of press clubs attached to Japanese government ministries and agencies.

The report accused Japan of “manipulation of media outlets through an opaque and clique-plagued system of press clubs and incentives to practice ‘access journalism’”.

Foreign concern

The situation is arguably even more difficult for foreign correspondents, with domestic media able to commit a reporter to every government ministry and agency, but overseas media typically having a single journalist in Japan and unable to access every significant news event.

Leo Lewis, who is Japan Tokyo correspondent for the *Financial Times*, said the *kisha* club system “adds a truly unnecessary layer of red tape or admin to what should be routine registrations for press events, giving away the fact that these are fundamentally closed when there is really no reason for them not to be completely open”.

That often results in foreign media being granted “observer” status and not permitted to ask the harder questions that their local counterparts might shy away from.

“The second reason—and I would say most important these days—is that it creates an unnecessary layer of opaqueness over the transmission of information, and makes Japanese media collusive

in the protection of officials and others who do not deserve anonymity. More so than ever, there needs to be accountability for who said what”.

Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, the BBC’s Tokyo correspondent, agrees that unfettered access to information should be the biggest concern.

“The deeper problem is that it has created and maintains a cozy relationship between Japan’s powerful bureaucrats and a chosen group of friendly media, who depend on access and are thereby captured by the organisations they are supposed to be keeping watch on,” he said.

“The result is that most of Japan’s fourth estate is not a fourth estate at all, but part of the government information ecosystem.

“Access journalism is a problem in many countries,” he conceded, pointing to the lobby system in Britain and the White House press corps in the US. He added, “Japan has taken this to a totally other level”.

Quoting another long-term foreign correspondent, Wingfield-Hayes said that Japanese journalists who rely on the *kisha* club system “are like chicks in a nest waiting to be fed”.

“In that respect, I think the system is incompatible with a healthy democracy,” he added.

History

Japan’s *kisha* clubs can be traced back to 1890 and the ban imposed by the first Imperial Diet on reporters. Journalists banded together, with the support of newspaper companies, to form the first press club and to lobby for access. The Allied Occupation administration attempted to do away with *kisha* clubs immediately after the war, but dropped the plan under pressure from the Japanese government and news organisations.

The issue was subsequently taken up by The Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan (FCCJ) and

the Foreign Press in Japan (FPIJ), with overseas reporters particularly unhappy at the lack of access to events surrounding the wedding in 1959 of Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko.

Kenta Yamada, a professor in the department of journalism at Senshu University, says the system of *kisha* clubs engenders “a sense of security” between ministries and the media as there is a “relationship of trust”, while clubs also provide a working space within the institution.

Yamada told *BCCJ ACUMEN* that the issue is less a problem of press clubs but more related to access to press conferences when there is high demand and entry is regulated by the club itself.

Looking ahead

Kazuo Kodama, a former press secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who went on to serve as Japan’s ambassador to the UN, to the OECD and the European Union, agrees that membership of *kisha* clubs bestows “privileges” on journalists assigned to ministries, but points out that when the Democratic Party was elected in 2009, new Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama opened press conferences at the Prime Minister’s Office to all media, a move that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs copied.

“I think that things are changing,” said Kodama, who is today president of the Foreign Press Centre. “The clubs may not want to change, but they are under constant pressure from outside to be more fair or democratic, especially from the non-mainstream media—freelancers, digital—who feel they have been treated badly”. For the foreign press, that change cannot come soon enough.

Justin McCurry, Japan and Korea correspondent for *The Guardian* and a member of the FPIJ committee, says *kisha* clubs are “simply a horrible way of doing journalism” that have in the past unnecessarily hampered his ability to do his job. But the solution is relatively straightforward, he believes.

“Open the ministries and agencies up to any journalist who can prove they are a legitimate reporter, including foreigner reporters,” he said. “We are not looking for special treatment and there would be no need to translate all documents into English, but opening up would at least give us a chance to do what we are here for”.

“The clubs may not want to change, but they are under constant pressure from outside to be more fair or democratic, especially from the non-mainstream media—freelancers, digital—who feel they have been treated badly”.

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WANTED: SOFT SKILLS

Firms positive about
post-pandemic future

BY MEGAN CASSON



Adjusting to a pandemic has not been easy for anybody. Individuals are working from home, and firms are still looking for ways to smoothly operate virtually. As the world opens up and vaccine programmes roll out, many firms are looking hard at the post-pandemic future.

While recruitment firms have a strong presence in Japan, the talent pool has always been smaller here in comparison to other countries. Demand in certain industries is changing and the need for different skills is increasing. *BCCJACUMEN* spoke to two industry professionals about the changing recruitment landscape, and the future of hiring in Japan.

Fierce rivalry

Robert Walters, whose firm specialises in permanent and contract recruitment solutions across all industries and sectors, said in a statement on 27 July that demand was outstripping supply in many of its 31 markets including Japan, the UK and United States, as hiring in the last six months had been speeding up.

“A war for talent and significant wage inflation is beginning to emerge”, the chief executive said while announcing the group's first-half results.

Jeremy Sampson, managing director at Robert Walters Japan, said:

“Because Japan is such a talent-short market, even with the impact of Covid-19, hiring activities were less impacted compared to other countries. The competition for top talent remains fierce, with about 80 percent of companies expressing concern about talent shortages within their industries, particularly in manager and senior level positions. When we surveyed professionals working in Japan, 73 percent expressed confidence and optimism about job opportunities in their sectors”.

Fabien Brogard Cipriani, founder and CEO of cloud recruitment management system HirePlanner, explained that companies seem to have had two general responses to the coronavirus pandemic.

“There are two types of companies: companies that play defence and pretty much stop hiring and go into hibernation mode to cut costs and ride out the storm, and companies that play offense. The latter use this time as an opportunity to build a strong talent pipeline. They meet as many people as they can and prepare for when the economy picks up again”.

Soft skills

As remote working took over the professional world in 2020, and continues into 2021, the skills that are in demand have changed. The ability to communicate and form relationships—particularly over online platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet—is more important than ever. The significance of soft skills has grown.

“In our survey, over 100 companies answered what skills are most in demand within organisations in a post-pandemic world. It’s no surprise that communication skills ranked at the top—being able to communicate effectively is vital to establishing and maintaining relationships both internally and

externally, especially with many working remotely these days. In times of crises and uncertainty, people often look for a strong figure who can lead the way in navigating difficulties, so it’s no wonder that management and leadership skills also rank high in terms of desirable soft skills,” said Sampson. “Closely related to this are crisis management skills. If the pandemic has taught businesses anything, it is that there is a dire need for crisis management skills to ensure that organisations can cope with the drastic changes in their methods of conducting business during challenging times.”

Industry demand

As lockdowns across the world have encouraged people to stay home, certain industries have seen demand skyrocket. “Companies in the IT and Technology space have been doing well, since there is a strong motivation and demand for digital transformation,” Cipriani pointed out.

Sampson agreed, revealing that the use of online services and entertainment has increased, with working from home making technology an

“When we surveyed professionals working in Japan, 73 percent expressed confidence and optimism about job opportunities in their sectors”.



Jeremy Sampson, managing director at Robert Walters Japan



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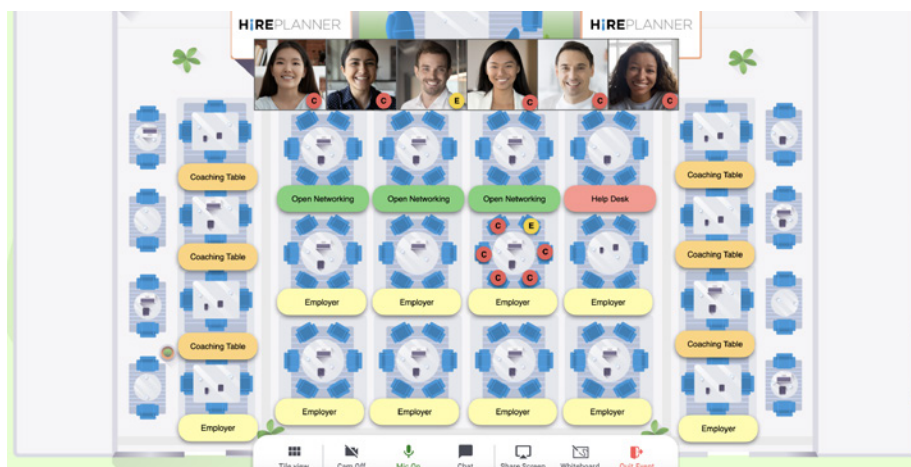
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essential. “Digital transformation has been huge as companies have been trying to adapt to become more tech-focused both internally and externally toward their customers. We have seen an uptick in the number of positions in companies which offer technology that enables remote work as well as online services. With more of our daily lives being spent online, digital security has also been important, and we are seeing rising demand for professionals with skills in tech security, cyber security and data security as companies bolster their security measures in place”.

WFH

Even in Japan, which has long put a priority on spending time in the office, companies have been offering more flexible working conditions during the pandemic—working from home and flexible work times have become the norm. This has become something candidates value, according to Sampson, and firms need to consider this to have a competitive advantage when trying to attract top talent.

“It’s becoming clear that more professionals are prioritising work style flexibility and expect it to become a regular option, even beyond the pandemic. Ninety-six percent of professionals in Japan that we surveyed said they place importance on work style flexibility when joining or working for a company”.

Sampson also discussed how this will affect the hiring process in Japan. During the pandemic, most hiring processes were held virtually, he said. “Ninety percent of companies conducted remote interviews soon after the outbreak. Even when companies gradually return to the office, we expect that remote interviews will continue, as they can

help speed up the selection process, particularly in the earlier stages”.

Cipriani brought up similar ideas, and commented on how firms need to demonstrate flexibility in their approaches. “We personally have been hiring people in various parts of Japan, some of whom we have not met physically. Showing extra flexibility and support to new employees has been proven to be a great way to strengthen our team.

“Now that employees work remotely, HR professionals need tools to collaborate with stakeholders—business managers, interviewers, agencies and candidates—so they can cut admin work and give them more time to focus on important things, such as building their employer branding strategy, sourcing candidates, sharing live status updates with the business and getting more for their recruiting budget”, he said.

Progress

BCCJ ACUMEN asked Cipriani how HirePlanner adapted to the pandemic, and how the past year and a half has impacted operations.

“Back in February 2020 I never expected I would say this, but the pandemic has actually had a positive impact on our business. Due to the multiple states of emergency keeping employees at home, Japan businesses had no choice but to accelerate their efforts towards digital transformation.

“As a direct result of the pandemic, we created our new Virtual Career Event, where we re-designed online job fairs as we know them. More than just a webinar, it is a new experience for businesses to attract bilingual candidates and an opportunity for young bilinguals to engage with a wide range of companies, learn about their culture, and receive career coaching sessions to help kick-start their careers”.

Sampson revealed how Robert Walters handled the pandemic at the very beginning, noting that it was one of the first firms in Japan to go fully remote, right at the start of the outbreak. “Even before the pandemic we had invested in technological infrastructure, such as personal computer devices, communication tools and cloud software. This enabled us to quickly transition to remote work.

“For our clients and candidates, we are providing industry-leading research, hiring and career advice, as well as market insights to help them navigate the new normal. We have helped both organisations and professionals adapt to remote hiring processes. Our webinars discuss common remote work challenges such as onboarding and employee engagement, and provide best practices to manage remote and hybrid workforces”.

Although Robert Walters’ business was impacted to a certain degree, the firm has noted significant recovery in the first half of 2021. “As the markets continue to recover, we are seeing high levels of hiring activity across the board”, Sampson said. “We see this as an opportunity for our business to grow more, and we’re very optimistic that the future looks bright”.



“As a direct result of the pandemic, we created our new Virtual Career Event, where we re-designed online job fairs as we know them”.

Fabien Brogard Cipriani, founder and CEO of HirePlanner

TRADE: TABLES TURNED

How the UK cut a £4 billion trade deficit with Japan into a level playing field of £25 billion in bilateral business

BY GAVIN BLAIR

In early-1980s Britain, there were plastic wall signs for sale that sent up the government’s Buy British campaign. Consisting of a Union Jack emblazoned with the Buy British slogan, in the bottom corner were the words Made in Japan. Today, that joke doesn’t work on multiple levels.

Japan has moved way up the value chain, and cheap, imported plastic goods are now expected to originate from elsewhere in Asia. The UK no longer runs large trade deficits with Japan. Indeed, while the UK imported £12.4bn in goods and services from Japan in 2020, £12.3bn’s worth went in the other direction. Though bilateral business inevitably fell in pandemic-hit 2020, there has been relative trade parity between the two nations in recent years.

Beyond 2000

Around the turn of the millennium, there were between £8bn and £10 bn in goods alone imported annually from Japan, but only £3.5bn to £5bn going the other way. By the end of the 2010s, UK goods exports to Japan had grown to £6.5bn, and exports of services had risen even more. Japan, on the other hand, saw annual goods exports decrease by around £2bn over the same period but also registered a rise in service exports. Japanese industry offshoring a significant portion of its manufacturing explains some of this, but there are multiple other factors at play.

“Over the last five years, we’ve seen a significant increase in exports from the UK, from approximately £10bn to £15bn, predominantly in services—in particular, financial services, insurance and intellectual property”, says Marie-Claire Joyce, head of trade for the Department of International Trade (DIT) at the British Embassy in Tokyo.



Rhys Isaac, head of investment at the DIT in Tokyo, adds, “Although manufactured goods are traded in high volumes, services exports from

Britain is seen as being an academic centre in the world, in terms of having a lot of high-ranking universities.

the UK tend to be high value, often with very large contracts. This helps explain why the trade deficit has been reduced over the last few years”.

Financial services are currently the UK’s biggest export to Japan, valued at £4.2bn in 2019. Nevertheless, there is room for considerable growth, according to Yuuichiro Nakajima, managing director of cross-border M&A advisory firm Crimson Phoenix.



The Japanese financial sector remains “very highly regulated”, says Nakajima, who points out that most of the major British banks have struggled to build a significant presence in the “very entrenched” market.

Financial data and news provider Refinitiv has carved out a niche for itself in Japan, where it has exclusive rights to deliver Reuters news through its terminals to customers, as well as providing finance industry solutions and systems.

“Japan buys a lot of information from overseas”, notes Hideo Tomita, representative director at Refinitiv Japan.



Tomita says that while a mature market such as Japan can’t match the

growth rates of emerging economies, business is good. This is driven in part by a growth in demand for information about global markets as Japanese institutional and retail investors increasingly look overseas for better returns than they can achieve at home.

Refinitiv was bought by the London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) in a \$27bn deal that went through in January this year after receiving regulatory approval and is expanding its offerings to “now provide end-to-end solutions for financial transactions”, according to Tomita.

Refinitiv, formerly a division of Reuters, being acquired by the LSEG is like “finally coming home” to its British roots, according to Tomita, after joint ownership by US private equity firm Blackstone and Thomson Reuters.

Autos growth

One UK manufacturing export success story is Jaguar Land Rover, which saw sales in Japan grow from around 2,500 vehicles in 2013 to around 8,000 in 2018. Even during pandemic-impacted 2020, it registered sales double the levels of 2013,



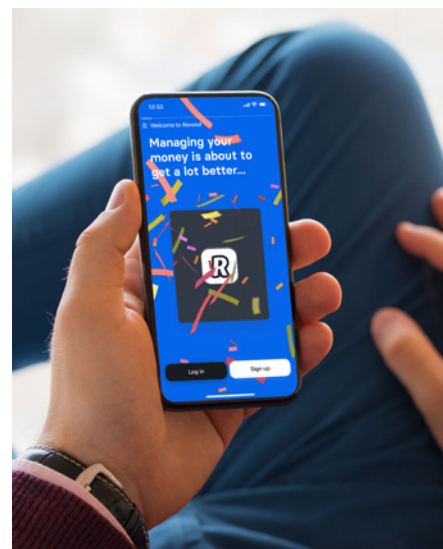
The 2022 Defender is the latest Land Rover to enter the growing SUV market in Japan.



Harrow International School Appi will open in 2022.



The Queen's Awards have celebrated UK exports for 55 years.



UK's Revolut released their digital banking app in Japan.

reports Magnus Hansson, CEO of its Japan operations.



Most of this growth has been on the Land Rover side of the business, driven by a combination of the growing popularity of SUVs in Japan, the marque's "unique visual identity in an age when cars are looking more and more similar to each other," and its brand image, according to Hansson.

"The origins of the brand are very important. It is heavily preferred by the British royal family. When Prince William has a baby, he is seen picking up Kate from the hospital in a Range Rover," says Hansson. As the brand's cache has risen in Japan, it has been able to sell more of its high-end models.

"There has been substantial growth in importation from the UK, with after-sales and parts also an expanding business, meaning the value of imports has risen even more than the volumes," explains Hansson.

Another UK auto firm that has found success in Japan is Lotus Cars. Japan has been Lotus Cars' largest market for many years. The Elise, Exige and Evora are Toyota-powered cars, with production ending this year. This will make space at the Norfolk, England, factory for a new line-up of electric sports cars, which are predicted to be successful in Japan.

Previously owned by Lotus Cars is British auto manufacturer, Caterham Cars. The firm was purchased outright by Japanese car dealer giant VT Holdings Co., Ltd. In April of this year and they hope to build on the success of the Caterham Seven

"There is a lot to be done to make it easier for British companies to enter and succeed in the Japanese market"

160—the first foreign-built car designed specifically to meet Japanese mini-car specifications.

Education export

British education is another expanding export to Japan, with a long presence here. The UK Department for Education said in December that combined total exports and transnational education activity were estimated at more than £12bn in 2018.

With multiple international schools using the British curriculum or basing their curricula around it, many pupils are reaping the benefits. The British School in Tokyo has been in operation since 1989 and has recently announced plans to open a new primary school campus in partnership with Mori Building Co., Ltd. Scheduled to open in 2023, the school is proof of the ongoing educational collaboration between the UK and Japan.

Clarence Education Asia (CEA) opened Tokyo-based Clarence International School in 2016, and are planning to open another institution—Phoenix House—in central Tokyo and Hokkaido in August. Located near the British Embassy Tokyo, the primary school will be based on the national curriculum of England.

Another establishment set to open in August 2022 is Harrow International School Appi. The school is based on the world-famous Harrow School

in London and will utilise the British international curriculum, which already holds a robust track record in Asia, with other schools across the region.

Another school currently being planned is Rugby School Japan. CEA is partnering with Rugby School in the UK to establish the institution, which will open in 2023 and accommodate day pupils and boarders in the Tokyo area.

Global recognition

Pharma giant AstraZeneca has been in the headlines for its coronavirus vaccine developed in collaboration with the University of Oxford, but it had already found success in Japan in several fields, including oncology.

"One of our molecularly targeted lung cancer medicines, which came out of our Cambridge labs, is our biggest product in Japan," says Stefan Woxström, AstraZeneca's Japan president. Initially used as a follow-up treatment, after clinical trials, the medicine was found to be even more effective as a first-line treatment for patients with a specific DNA profile.

"This is an example of the precision or targeted medicines that we have been exploring, which are becoming increasingly important."

Three years ago, AstraZeneca was ranked ninth in the sector in Japan, according to US-based



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AstraZeneca's biggest-selling product in Japan is a cancer drug from its laboratory in Cambridge.

multinational information, services and technology firm IQVIA, but has since moved up to third.

The firm imports much of its medicine from its manufacturing sites in the UK and Sweden, which are then packaged and distributed by the Saitama factory of Daiichi Sankyo Biotech Co.

"AstraZeneca is very much seen as a British company—it's where our headquarters and a major part of our science are located. Britain is seen as being an academic centre in the world, in terms of having a lot of high-ranking universities. That can never be a negative when you work in science," adds Woxström.

Breaking barriers

Pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs and legal services are among the areas in which the DIT has been lobbying for the removal of market access barriers, and is continuing to do so since the UK-Japan free trade agreement (FTA) was signed in October last year.

"The FTA will also benefit the UK food and drink sector, removing tariffs on 99 percent of exports over the next 15 years. Products such as Scottish

"The FTA will also benefit the UK food and drink sector, removing tariffs on 99 percent of exports over the next 15 years"

salmon, whisky, shortbread, and others are already well-known in Japan. But new products such as English sparkling wine, and British gins and cheeses, to name a few, are now selling well. We also see the potential for organic, vegan and plant-based products, which are becoming more popular in Japan," says the DIT's Joyce.

The FTA has also stoked interest among UK companies, more than 2,000 of which participated in the DIT's "Partnership with Japan" campaign from March to June. Many of them were matched with Japanese companies as potential partners.

"Through this campaign, we've been able to demystify some of the myths about doing business with Japan and reassure companies that whilst it's a challenging market, it's not an impossible market," adds Joyce.

Products featured in *BCCJ ACUMEN's* Great British Products section, such as Costa Coffee,

Fever Tree, Nyetimber, Silent Pool Distillers, The Scottish Salmon Company, Molton Brown, Caterham Cars Ltd and Lotus Cars, are prime examples of firms that benefit from the FTA.

However, there is more potential for growth.

"There is a lot to be done to make it easier for British companies to enter and succeed in the Japanese market," says Crimson Phoenix's Nakajima. "Many British companies are still underrepresented in what is still the world's third-largest economy" 🇯🇵



REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

Japan Society webinar explores ongoing collaboration between Oxford and Tokyo

BY MEGAN CASSON

If nothing else, the world's ongoing fight against the coronavirus pandemic underscores the importance of international medical collaboration.

On 11 May, Japan Society chairman Bill Emmott was joined by Professors Paul Riley and Georg Holländer from the new Institute of Developmental and Regenerative Medicine (IDRM) at the University of Oxford and Professor Shin'ichi Takeda of the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry in Tokyo to discuss regenerative medicine and its potential impact on global health.

Opening doors

Riley started the event by explaining what regenerative medicine is.

"Regenerative medicine is the process of replacing or regenerating human cells, tissues or organs to restore or establish normal function. And I think it's fair to say that regenerative medicine is extremely challenging. There have been very few clinical successes in this space, which means that it's very

Two thirds of the deaths worldwide are due to non-communicable diseases.

important to think about alternative ways to tackle potential degenerative diseases".

Riley went on to explain the ongoing IDRM project within the Medical Sciences Division at the University of Oxford. Led by himself and Professors Georg Holländer and Matthew Wood, the latter of whom could not join the webinar, the project will be opening its doors in January 2022.

"It is, at its core, a merger of developmental biology and regenerative medicine, and our philosophy is very simple: we seek to understand how tissues and organs are formed in during development during pregnancy, to then inform strategies to repair and replace the same tissues and organs when damaged or injured through disease".

The IDRM is a three-storey building which will have themes in immunology, cardiology, and neurology.

"Integrating across those, 50 percent capacity will be from incoming Oxford researchers. But also it represents a very valuable recruitment tool and, of course, a tool in which we hope to establish international links and further collaborations particularly with our colleagues in Japan," Riley said.

Future goals

Riley explained that two thirds of the deaths worldwide are due to non-communicable diseases (preventable diseases through lifestyle modification). Many deaths are caused by non-viral type diseases, and a lot of these are cardiovascular, neurological or immune system disorders that have a developmental origin. Hence, there is an urgent need for new drugs and therapeutic strategies to replace and restore damaged tissue arising from birth defects,



Professors Shin'ichi Takeda, Georg Holländer and Paul Riley

or acquired adult tissue injury and disease”, Riley explained.

It was said that the goals of the institute are to improve the current understanding of the molecular and cellular inputs to control the normal development of the heart, brain and immune system, in an attempt to decipher mechanisms that cause congenital disease, birth defects and an increased susceptibility for adult disease.

Riley explained the importance of integrating world leading research programs. The hope is that this will inevitably lead to therapeutic endpoints in treating patients.

“None of this can be done locally and without international collaboration. We are extremely proud of the fact that we’ve got significant collaborations with Japanese colleagues. And we’d like to establish those much further particularly thinking about the exchange of trainees, so students and postdocs, and establishing fellowship programs, to enable those trainees to experience the best of what we have to offer in Oxford and elsewhere in host Japanese institutions”, he said.

Immunology

Holländer explained why studying the immune system is of importance, particularly in the current pandemic. He explained the immune system’s ability is to discriminate between self (the body’s own normal cells) and nonself (abnormal cells). “When recognising self, the immune system



28% of the
Japan population
is 65 and over

Source: Statista



18% of the UK
population is
65 and over

Source: UK.gov

“We are extremely proud of the fact that we've got significant collaborations with Japanese colleagues”

should be tolerant. In the other instance, where it recognises non self, it should create a directed and effective immune response.

“So what the immune system does is similar to what our cognitive system does, it recognises patterns established as normal... and the nonself. On the one hand, we have the innate immune system, which responds very quickly but can only recognise a number of different foreign antigens or normal self antigens. On the other hand, we have the adaptive immune system, which takes a couple of days to respond, but has a non-limited capacity to recognise nonself, but also actively prevents its activation when recognising self. This results in neurological memory”.

At the centre of the adaptive immune system are T cells, explained Holländer. “These cells are generated in the thymus, which is an organ sitting on top of the mount in the chest and produces new T cells that orchestrate the adaptive immune response. However, this organ decreases in size and function with age. So, when you are older than your mid-teens—namely, after puberty—the final output decreases dramatically. It is merely a trickle at ages beyond 50.

Holländer explained that this is important because we only have a limited number of T cells in our body, and only a relatively limited number of their receptor specificities recognise all different antigens. “We need to keep that pool of T cells alive because, with age, we decrease our vaccine responses. We are more impaired in our responses against infectious diseases, or malignant cells in the context of cancer and the chances of developing autoimmunity increases”, he explained.

Trying to better understanding how the thymus can be regenerated is the focus of the work in the immunology branch of the IDR. “This is an effort that is not only to be exercised in idea, but is actually a global activity with a lot of colleagues and friends in Japan, who contribute to our growing understanding of thymus epithelial cells, what their stem cells look like, how we can mature them, manipulate them, how they grow. And last but not least, how well their function is to teach the immune system to distinguish between self and nonself”.

Holländer explained that these collaborations are with universities in Kyoto, Sendai, Takashima and Tokyo. “This is also an activity we have been able to undertake in collaboration with Dr Tetsuya Nakamura, Chief Director of Itabashi Medical System Group (IMS-Group), who enabled us to create the institute, and with whom we plan to establish exchange fellowship roles between our organisations to further our knowledge in regenerative medicine”.

Tokyo input

Takeda, of the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry, explained that he has been participating in the progress of stem cell research, particularly in the areas of skeletal muscle and muscular dystrophy. He noted progress and research based on genetically corrected cells, gene therapy, and many others.

“The key player in muscle regeneration is subtle cells. There are progenitor cells that support the muscle regeneration process together with macrophage cells. These cells also play a distinct role in the step of fibrosis and fatty infiltrations in skeletal muscle as well”, he said.

Speaking on the research groups within the neuroscience department of the IDR, he noted the importance of collaboration, “There is a long history of collaboration between the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry and the University of Oxford. We are now expecting the results of the current ongoing collaboration, and also future extended collaboration programmes”.



The regenerative medicine market is expected to grow at a rate of 16.3% and reach £28.4 BILLION by 2030

Source: P&S Intelligence

NFTs: THE MISSING LINK?

Traditional art embraces blockchain technology in world-first project

BY JULIAN RYALL

A new Tokyo gallery—jointly founded by a British businessman—is providing a revolutionary take on art, leveraging the unique capabilities of the blockchain to bring its vision to life.

Sven Palys, founder and joint-CEO of cultural intelligence and brand consultancy Yuzu Kyodai, set up Strata Gallery earlier this year with four colleagues and the ambition of expanding the possibilities of artistic expression through technology.

The gallery's first project, by Mexican artist Héctor Falcón, is titled *Whole Picture* and is designed to bridge physical and digital art through blockchain technology by reimagining his artistic vision in the digital realm, Palys said.

"Hector has been with us right from the start of Strata: he just felt like the perfect artist to work with on our first project," said Palys, who is also on the executive committee of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

"He is always pushing boundaries, always questioning what art and, in particular, what beauty is, how our society thinks of these things," he told *BCCJ ACUMEN*. "He is a fantastic painter, but he is also a film-maker and sculptor; and he has even used his own body as art in really challenging ways. He thrives on installations that get viewers involved in the creative process.

"The art series that *Whole Picture* is a continuation of—these multi-layered canvases with holes cut out of them—really sum up his constant search to look beyond the superficial."

Whole Picture is a collaboration between the artist and participants, creating 1,200 unique, multi-layered, interactive artworks to serve as a bridge between digital and physical art.

Technology is, however, undeniably beginning to refashion the art market.



Sven Palys brings together blockchain, art, Japan, the world and entrepreneurs.

Trusting process

Each piece consists of four digital canvases of varying rarity, with a number of opportunities to lock in the viewer's preferred images. When complete, the digital works can be manipulated by their owners. Layers can be rearranged, slid in different directions, and even moved automatically so that the larger work is viewed from a perspective that is constantly changing.

The projects evolve as they are revisited by the artist, creating longer-term value and enjoyment from what is a creative journey in which the artworks almost take on a life of their own.

To create the pieces, Falcón cut circles through his own multi-layered canvases to reveal more images lying beneath. He has said that taking the project into the non-fungible token (NFT) sphere seemed "very natural".

"It is a collaborative artistic experience that challenges some of the dogmas of traditional art by giving birth to a new level of artistic expression," he said. "In making these pieces, I wanted to combine the world of the artist with the actions of the person who consumes the art, without either of the two being wrong or out of place.

"It is not about buyers making an image that I have to like," he said. "The idea is that in this digital dimension I can play a sort of game - between my artistic proposal on the one hand and their wishes or preferences on the other.

"What results is a unique artwork, born from a playful and dynamic act".

Pushing boundaries

As it is the first interactive NFT artwork and sale event in the world, Palys hopes Strata Gallery will



“The basic premise is that physical and digital arts can interact and elevate each other”

challenge “old school” perceptions of digital art being at odds with physical works of art.

“The basic premise is that physical and digital art can interact and elevate each other”, said Palys, 33, who was born in Essex, grew up in Bahrain and read Japanese Studies at the University of Cambridge.

“We don’t really see NFTs as yet fulfilling any promise of democratising art, which is something that is often claimed, that it somehow makes art more accessible”, he said. “Art already is: anyone can buy a print for a few pounds, or view National Gallery treasures online.

“And while there is a real sense of community amongst NFT enthusiasts and innovators, it is a community with high barriers to entry: the technology, the jargon, the need for crypto wallets. These are all hurdles.”

Technology is, however, undeniably beginning to refashion the art market.

“NFT buyers right now mainly think in terms of collectibles rather than art collection, but we are only at the start of what NFTs can be as a medium for artistic expression”, Palys emphasises. “We see our job as producers who can partner and brainstorm with artists on how to take what they already create and take it into the digital realm, not by pixellating it, but by taking it in a different direction, taking it further.”

Japanese inspiration

Palys can trace his own fascination with Japanese culture—both traditional and popular—to a very young age and first came to Japan in the early summer of 2011, shortly after the Tohoku earthquake, on a Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology scholarship to study media theory at the University of Tokyo.

“I’m a fan of modern art for its purpose of challenging all the norms and conventions that art has stuck to for hundreds of years”, he said. “I love art that challenges expectations and, through that, puts a mirror to our own prejudices. For me, art is at its most powerful when it captures feelings or concepts that words have trouble catching.”

Previous collaborations with a group of like-minded admirers of modern art—Emiliano Liviero and Anna Maxwell at Yuzu Kyodai, as well as Jasper Degens and Barak Chamo—almost inevitably led to the creation of Strata Gallery.

“We think there is an opportunity for an NFT gallery that can demonstrate real integrity in how it helps artists to use this new medium to take their art further, to create art of enduring value and importance”, Palys said. “We want to produce and showcase art that can express beauty and humanity, engage our senses, give us an idiosyncratic view of the world.”

Hector Falcón’s ground-breaking works are being displayed in Proud Gallery in London’s Covent Garden, in the Heart Ego gallery in Mexico City and an artistic “take-over” of the lobby of the Landabout Hotel, a boutique property in Tokyo’s artistic Uguisudani district.

The gallery is particularly keen to expand the collaboration with Intellex, the property development and refurbishment company behind the Landabout Hotel, and whose CEO, Toshinari Seiji, has been a strong supporter of Strata Gallery.

The aim, Palys says, is to further elevate the properties that Intellex has already transformed through its clever and sensitive approach to living spaces with art. Both Strata and Intellex firmly believe that incorporating art into everyday living spaces can only serve as a force for creativity and self-expression.

Palys says he is excited at a project that ties connects blockchain, art, Japan, the world, new modes of living and foreign entrepreneurship in Japan.

“We don’t see NFTs as a declaration of war on traditional, tangible art”, Palys said. “In the right hands, the two mediums can enhance each other, add a different dimension that does what all great arts does; it shows us the world in a different way, through a new lens.” 🇯🇵

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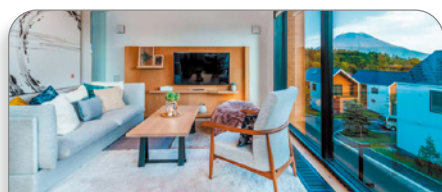
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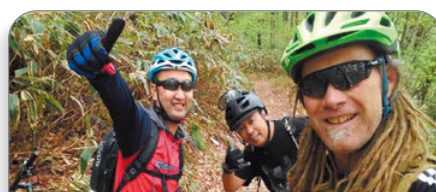
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TAKE A BREAK IN TOKYO

Mori offers luxurious
spaces for remote work



As the pandemic lingers, having employees work from home has become the norm for many businesses. When it comes to boosting their well-being and mood, to say nothing of increasing their productivity, it helps most individuals to have a change of scenery. And Mori serviced apartments offer exactly that. A variety of beautifully designed residences provide tenants with a range of amenities to enjoy while working remotely.

Ease of use

All of the units are completely furnished and, including Wi-Fi and a full range of appliances, they meet the daily needs of residents.

Residents have access to five members-only HILLS SPAs in different parts of the city. Perfect for those looking to unwind at the end of a stressful day, the venues offer high-quality pools, gyms, lounges and beauty treatments designed to help you relax, recharge and refresh.

The broad range of facilities, designed for residents' comfort and convenience, are provided by attentive, professional staff and include a 24-hour bilingual concierge, room service, housekeeping and laundry services. The residences thus help ease the small pressures of daily life, benefitting both permanent residents and those there short-term to work remotely.



The serviced apartments are located in some of the most desirable, central Tokyo neighbourhoods

Luxurious options

Since the serviced apartments are located in some of the most desirable, central Tokyo neighbourhoods, they are an excellent option for a “workation”, not just a permanent residence.

One of the residences is located in Roppongi Hills and has a clinic, childcare centre, banks, and a post office close by. The Roppongi neighbourhood is cosmopolitan and boasts world-class museums, shops, boutiques selling luxury brands, and a wide variety of businesses.

Roppongi Hills Residence D offers high-quality apartments with deluxe interiors that clearly prioritized the comfort and enjoyment of residents. For the benefit of tenants, there is a Health Consultation Room—where the doctors and nurses are provided through collaboration with a university hospital—while the Roppongi Hills Spa and rooftop garden provide them with relaxation and enjoyment.

Another impressive Mori residence is the Atago Green Hills Forest Tower. Situated in a district with a wealth of natural beauty, the elegantly designed apartments here offer superb hospitality and services. On the top floor is the Sky Deck, an observation gallery that boasts incredible views over Tokyo Bay.

But it is not only the décor of the interiors—so balanced and beautifully fitted out—that makes the apartments attractive to those looking for a work retreat. The Atago Green Hills Forest Tower is

located in the exclusive Minato Ward, from where some of Tokyo's most important business areas are easily accessible.

Also located in Minato Ward is Mori's ARK Towers. Known as a vibrant space that blends business, retail and leisure activities, the towers are part of the ARK Hills complex, a major Tokyo business centre. As well as being a stone's throw from a multitude of business locations, the residences here are close to parks and other green spaces, easily accessed by those wanting a break from the hustle and bustle of a busy working life. The modern accommodation provides meticulous service and features a full security system.

The Prudential Tower residences—on the 26th to the 38th floors—offer wonderful views across Tokyo that stretch as far as Mt Fuji. The stylish and elegant interior of the apartments helps add a luxurious twist to working remotely. This tower has shops on its ground and first floors, and offices on floors three to 24. The complex includes restaurants, cafés, a gym—in fact everything one needs for modern urban living. Nagatacho, where the Diet and the Prime Minister's Office are located, is but a short distance away, making it a prime central location.

With an impressive selection of residences, all of which offer distinctive, comfortable spaces, Mori serviced apartments provide the perfect setting for those wanting to diversify their work-from-home lifestyle. 🇯🇵



To find out more, visit their website:

https://www.moriliving.com/en/morisa_workfromhome

JMEC 27: AND THE WINNERS ARE ...

Staff from the British Embassy Tokyo and Custom Media, plus world's biggest drinks maker and several healthcare providers

BY MEGAN CASSON

On 9 June, the Japan Market Expansion Competition (JMEC) held its 27th online awards ceremony. This year, there were 47 participants from 13 countries, all of whom showed dedication and hard work throughout their JMEC experience.

JMEC, an NPO, was founded in 1993 by the Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan and is supported by 18 foreign chambers of commerce in Tokyo. The business plan competition begins with lectures and training, followed by hands-on experience in putting together a business plan for an assigned project client. The teams then present their business plans to the judges—a panel of successful foreign and Japanese business leaders in Japan—who decide on the winners.

This year, nine project clients—ranging from global companies, private clubs, and small to medium-sized enterprises—were involved.

“It was a challenging but valuable experience in team building, leadership and, of course, business plan creation”

Changing times

At the JMEC awards ceremony on 9 June, JMEC Chairman Tom Whitson commented on how states of emergency triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic presented the teams with new challenges. “Teams had to change the way they researched and interacted to develop their business plans. The plans showed perceptive analysis and creative ideas to help our projects clients. You have all truly earned your certificates as graduates of our JMEC business training programme. On behalf of the JMEC team, I want to thank the companies that sponsored projects and to the lecturers, judges, team mentors and consultants who gave up days of their time to make this program a success”.

Due to multiple states of emergency, this year's JMEC programme was primarily carried out virtually,

with teams meeting through online platforms such as Zoom and utilising web-based market research and survey tools such as Euromonitor, ScoutAsia, Meltwater and Toluna. Michael Pfeffer, a graphic designer at *BCCJ ACUMEN*'s publisher, Custom Media, was a member of Team 2. The team took home the first-place prize after putting together an impressive business plan for Regemat 3D, a Spanish biotech company that focusses on regenerative medicine, particularly through the use of 3D printing.

Pfeffer spoke about his experience participating in the programme virtually. “Having worked for months with the other members of my team and having shared common goals, it's easy to forget that some of us have never actually met in person. We had set up regular meetings and reported our progress to our client right up to when we submitted the final business plan”.

Team 2 leader Eric Lam, echoed his teammate's sentiments. “It was a challenging but valuable experience in team building, leadership and, of course, business plan creation. Talking to real people in the industry can give insightful clues on how to further build a case for your ideas”.

Winning words

Pfeffer also spoke on the JMEC experience as a whole, and how he and his teammates worked together over the many months leading up to the awards ceremony.

“The programme was unlike anything I've experienced before. I've taken lectures and been on teams in the past, but the diverse backgrounds of the people involved and the way the whole programme is structured really made this a truly unique learning experience”, he said.

Pfeffer and Lam mentioned the challenges that their team faced. Pfeffer spoke on the importance



Top left: Michael Pfeffer with team leader Eric Lam and their JMEC team



Eriko Hirakado (left) with team members Ai Furuhashi, Shushi Tsuchiya and Prajan Sanku

of understanding their client's product. "The greatest challenge was understanding a very technical and cutting-edge product and marketing it to a very select audience. In particular, the market research for such a product was extremely challenging, due to it being such a specialised industry".

Lam also commented on the challenges, saying: "It wasn't always easy deciding on the right direction—especially what strategy would best lead to success for our client—and sometimes we had to change direction based on new evidence. But, of course, there were some great positives too. Discovering the new and exciting application of 3D printing technology in medicine was so interesting, and I am hoping that these new treatments will be developed soon".

Juggling time

Eriko Hirakado was a participant in Team 3, winners of the Best Presentation Award. Their project client was world-famous soft drink manufacturing company Coca-Cola Bottlers Japan, Inc., and the team were commended on their clear communication and ability to handle tough questions from the judges during their presentation.

Hirakado, who works as a consular assistant at the British Embassy Tokyo, spoke on the challenges of juggling a full-time work schedule and JMEC. "As the programme became more intense, it was challenging for me to try and catch up with the other team members. We were very happy with the fact that we received the best presentation award after having worked on the countless team meetings and study groups every weekend—and on many weekdays too.

"The JMEC experience was a new adventure for me. Sharing it with my wonderful teammates and our awesome team mentor and team consultant—who were always there to guide us throughout the programme—was an invaluable experience for me. I came to this programme wanting to develop my potential. I have walked away with not just the skills and knowledge, but also the confidence to believe in myself", she explained.

Next year's goal

When asked what advice he would give to those considering taking part in JMEC 28, Lam encourages future participants to enjoy the process. "Try not to treat it as a chore. See the bright and fun side. This will go a long way into remaining positive about all the work that lies ahead. I personally treated it as a way to explore what the team and I were capable of. And, if nothing else, it is a chance to connect with some new people—socially and professionally".

Pfeffer recommended getting off to a quick beginning: "When you receive your team assignment and project client, get started immediately. Meet the members, understand the scope of work, research the client and the industry and schedule a meeting with the client as soon as possible. The sooner you get a jump on the assignment, the more likely you will be positioned for success".

On the same note, Hirakado offered her words of wisdom. "Have good communication with your team members and be grateful for each other. You can learn something from everyone".

JMEC 28 begins in August 2021, and programme lectures will start on 13 November. Please visit the website for more information: www.jmec.gr.jp 🇯🇵

PRIZE WINNERS

First Prize: Team 2

Louis Cui, Eric Lam, Mayuko Nara,
Michael Pfeffer, Rie Takahashi,
Takuyuki Tsunoda
Mentor: Mitsuhiro Honda
Consultant: Fabrizio Mura
Project Client: Regemat 3D

Second Prize: Team 9

Svetlana Aleekseva, Edmund Lim,
Kosuke Nakano, Tai Phung,
Coco Takemura, Akira Watanabe
Mentor: Risa Dimacali
Consultant: William Pieschel
Project Client: Ipsos Healthcare

Third Prize: Team 4

Kaoru Akima, Kelsey Britton, Dave Mateo,
Anna Takasaki, Shunsuke Takechi
Mentor: Jay Johannesen
Consultant: Patricia Bader-Johnston
Project Client: Origio/CooperSurgical

SPECIAL MENTION AWARDS

Three teams received special mention awards from the judging panel to recognise outstanding efforts.

Best Presentation Award

Team 3 for their project client, Coca-Cola Bottlers Japan, Inc..

Best Market Research Award

Team 5 for their project client, SignTime, which provides e-signature services for digital documents.

Best "Deep Dive" Award

Team 8 for their project client, Coloplast, a global medical equipment company headquartered in Denmark.



The William Adams annual memorial event was held in Hirado, Nagasaki Prefecture. Due to Covid-19 the event was restricted to guests from Nagasaki. Messages from the William Adams Club (WAC) were read out in front of Adams' grave to a group of Hirado citizens.

Copies of the official portrait of Adams by Nicky Farrell that was commissioned by WAC were presented to Hirado Mayor Naruhiko Kuroda and Aki Oseki of the Hirado Relations Association.



1
The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) moved to a new location on 1 July. After five years at the Ark Hills Front Tower, the BCCJ is now sharing office space with long-term Platinum member and British multinational luxury automotive company, Jaguar Land Rover Japan.

2
Some of the first pupils at Phoenix House International School enjoyed the natural surroundings at the North Peak enrichment campus in Hokkaido Prefecture.

3
Year Six students from The British School in Tokyo (BST) graduated from Primary School and are looking forward to their Secondary School lives. All the eager pupils attended their farewell assembly that showcased videos of the highlights of their final year of primary education.

4
Year 13 students had their graduation ceremony at BST and are now looking toward the next chapter in their lives. Best of luck to them all.

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

ARTS

UK CULTURE IN JAPAN

COMPILED BY:

MISA YASHIRO

coordinator@custom-media.com

1 UNTIL 26 SEPTEMBER

The Challenges and Joys of Steel: David Smith's Circle IV and Other Sculpture

Artist David Smith (1906–1965) was one of the most renowned sculptors, and an influence on Sir Anthony Alfred Caro OM CBE, an English abstract sculptor. Caro's style was modernist and was lauded as the greatest British sculptor of his generation. This mini-exhibition explores the importance of steel as a sculptural material.

The National Museum of Modern Art

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

¥500

momat.go.jp/English/am/exhibition/davidsmith2021e

🎟️ FREE: We have **five pairs of tickets** to give away.

2 UNTIL 5 SEPTEMBER

René Lalique

This exhibition focuses on the works of French artist René Lalique. He spent two years at the Crystal Palace School of Art in Sydenham, London. During that time he also practised as an apprentice goldsmith to leading Parisian Art Nouveau jeweller and goldsmith Louis Aucoc, who informed his work in jewellery and glass.

Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum

5-21-9, Shirokanedai, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-0071

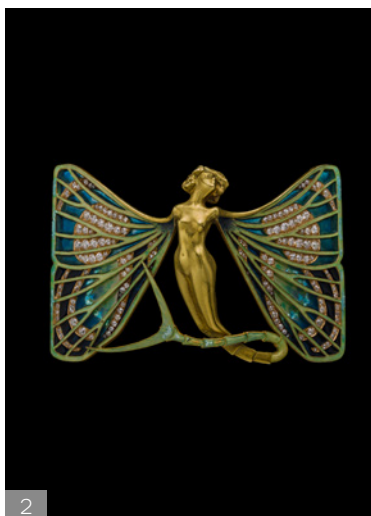
050-5541-8600 | www.teien-art-museum.ne.jp/en

¥700–1,400

🎟️ FREE: We have **five pairs of tickets** to give away.



ARTWORK: DAVID SMITH <<CIRCLE IV>>, 1962 @SATO.KATSUAKI



BUTTERFLY BROOCH SYLPHIDE C.1900, PRIVATE COLLECTION, COURTESY OF ALBION ART JEWELLERY INSTITUTE



NIGHT LIGHT SWALLOWS, BODY TOURBILLIONS 1919, GALERIE ORPHÉE



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



3

3 NOW SHOWING

The Lighthouse

The 2019 film *The Lighthouse*, starring British actor Robert Pattinson and US actor Willem Dafoe is a gothic psychological horror film that was nominated for Best Cinematography at the 73rd British Academy Film Awards in February 2020. This film has recently been released in Japan, and is not one to miss.

🎁 FREE: We have **one pair of tickets** to give away.

4 NOW SHOWING

NTLive Medea

Euripides' classic tragedy was brought to life through the 2014 National Theatre performance. In Euripides' classic story, a heartbroken Medea—played by the late British actress Helen McCrory—plots revenge on her ex-husband. The production was filmed by the National Theatre and will be playing at Toho Cinemas Chanter and other select locations.

Toho Cinemas Chanter

1-2-2 Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0006
050-6868-5001 | ntlive.jp/medea

5 8 AUGUST–29 AUGUST

Jamie

This musical, based on the BBC Three documentary *Jamie: Drag Queen at 16*, will premier in Japan this summer, performed by Japanese actors. The performance has been a hit in the London West End, as well as being nominated for the Lawrence Olivier Award in five categories.

Tokyo Building Brillia HALL

(Toshima Arts and Culture Theater)

1-19-1 Higashiikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 170-0013
¥6,000–12,800
03 3490 4949 | toshima-theatre.jp/event/000490

PHOTO: NTLIVE MEDIA (C) RICHARD-HUBERT-SMITH



4



5



TOHOKU WEEK

BCCJ highlights local businesses and tourism

BY MEGAN CASSON

During Tohoku Week, held between 12 and 16 July, the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) shone a spotlight on local businesses and tourism in Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima. These were the prefectures most acutely affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 11 March 2011. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the disaster.

Tohoku Week was launched to help BCCJ members and followers connect with the stories of local people, still working hard to rebuild their local communities, livelihoods and individual situations. Additionally, Tohoku Week—the BCCJ’s first Japan regional deep dive—helped to promote local businesses and tourism in the three prefectures, both remotely and in person.

Lori Henderson, executive director at the BCCJ noted the hard work the BCCJ team had put in to present members and the wider community with “business and community projects that might benefit from future support”.

Virtual experience

On the second day, BCCJ members travelled virtually through Miyagi, where Ishinomaki-based BCCJ member Kyoko Sasaki—one of the local leaders of the BCCJ’s Back to Business (B2B) for Tohoku Initiative—gave a virtual tour around spots in Ishinomaki and Onagawa.

On the third day, the focus was on Iwate, highlighting recent developments. The prefecture

“I hope that we will see British companies also attracted to the region. We can all play our part”.

has seen a massive effort to rebuild livelihoods and local industries. A new city hall was opened earlier this year in Rikuzentakata, while Watami Organic Land, Japan’s largest organic-farming theme park, opened on 29 April.

There was also mention of BCCJ member firm Walk Japan’s nine-day tour of the Michinoku Coastal Trail. This is a 1,025km footpath that starts in the city of Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture, and ends in Soma, Fukushima Prefecture.

The fourth day focused on Fukushima, Japan’s third-largest prefecture. The 2011 earthquake and tsunami devastated the prefecture’s coastal areas, causing a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, resulting in the evacuation of thousands of people.

Tohoku Week took a look at some of the local businesses in the area. Suzuki Sake is a brewery that is focusing on producing the drink made from local Fukushima rice, which dropped in value in the aftermath of the disaster. The brewery originally

was based in Namie, Fukushima, but it had to relocate to Yamagata Prefecture. The enterprise is in the process of returning to Namie, according to the head of the brewery, Daisuke Suzuki. He said that continuing to make the sake brought hope, adding that, “I hope to be a testament to the lives which have been lost”.

Ambassador’s note

When Tohoku Week came to an end, Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Japan, Julia Longbottom CMG, provided some closing words.

“I know there are British people living in Tohoku who are doing their best to forge strong links of friendship and cooperation between our two countries. I hope that we will see British companies also attracted to the region. We can all play our part.

“I look forward to visiting the region as soon as I can and seeing for myself the amazing work that BCCJ members are doing with local enterprises” 🇬🇧

To read more about Tohoku Week, please visit the BCCJ website: bccjapan.com

For more ways to support social enterprise and small businesses in Tohoku, please visit: wawa.or.jp/en

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