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British Chamber of
Commerce in Japan

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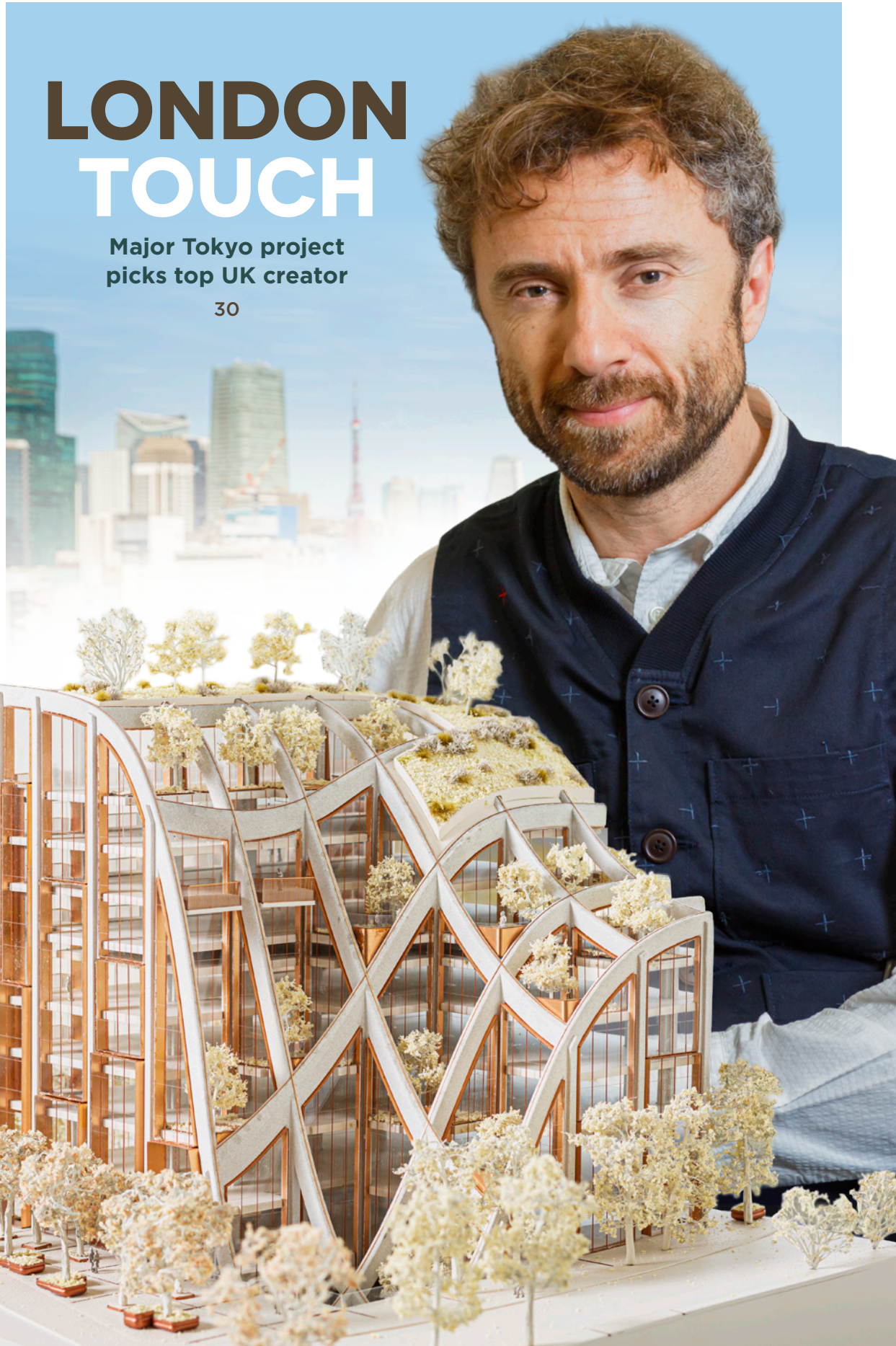
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The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan

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

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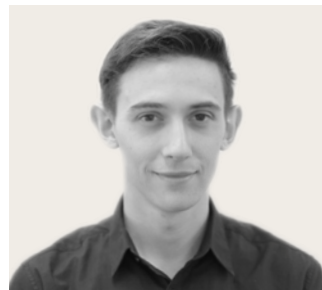
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Japan in the UK

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



I spent much of July in the UK on a mix of business and leave. Whilst I was there, we got a new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and many new Cabinet members. The new Administration has made clear its determination to leave the EU on 31 October, and the whole government system is very focused on delivering this. Members of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan will recall Boris Johnson speaking at a chamber breakfast when he visited in 2017, when he impressed with his energy and enthusiasm.



Japan in Northern Ireland

I try to visit different parts of the UK to learn more about their links with Japan. Last summer, I had visited Scotland and Wales, so this time I decided to go to Northern Ireland, which has entered the public consciousness this year because of the issue of the “Irish Backstop” in the Brexit context. It’s only an 80-minute flight from London, similar to the kind of hops that Japanese make around the four main islands here. I met a number of Japanese investors there across a

variety of sectors: medical equipment, IT, electronic components, aluminium castings and blockchain technology. All were very complimentary of Northern Ireland as a place to do business, with a high-quality workforce and a cost base significantly lower than in most other parts of the UK.

One of Northern Ireland’s strengths is education. Its primary school system is sixth in the world for maths. I visited the two universities, Queen’s and Ulster, and met representatives of a number of further education colleges. All were keen to talk about their links with Japan—from joint research to student exchanges—and were enthusiastic to do more.

I had briefings from the Northern Ireland Administration at Stormont Castle, and was taken on a tour of some of the now very peaceful former conflict zones around inner Belfast, whose names were very memorable from news coverage of the “troubles” before the Good Friday Agreement 20 years ago.

Universities and sake in East Anglia

Education was also a theme of a brief visit to East Anglia. I met the Japanese faculty at Cambridge University and at the University of East Anglia’s Sainsbury Institute of Japanese Arts and Culture, both very distinguished institutions in their fields.

Whilst in Cambridge, I visited Arm Holdings, the world-leading semiconductor design and software firm acquired by SoftBank in 2015. It is on target to meet SoftBank’s commitment to double UK staff numbers.

And, at Fordham Abbey, I visited Dojima Sake Brewery, who are developing a number of Japanese cultural experiences alongside the new brewery.



The Northern Ireland Administration also arranged a visit to the famous Giant’s Causeway (above), where the beautiful setting and unique geological feature of hexagonal basalt pillars attract several million tourists each year. The National Trust, who manage the site, told me they’d like to see more Japanese visitors.

The Embassy is currently preparing for the onslaught of visitors in what promises to be an incredibly busy autumn.

Financial services and fintech

In London, I joined the programme of Tokyo Deputy Mayor for Financial Services Hiroshi Nakaso, for calls at the House of Lords and the Lord Mayor's Mansion House. I also visited a lively fintech hub, sponsored by Barclays, in the trendy Shoreditch area, known as the "silicon roundabout." Fintech is a big strength of the UK, thanks to the proximity of a global financial centre in the City and a range of world-class universities.

Britain was sweltering in its hottest-ever July, with temperatures reaching 38.5C—actually a bit too high in a country where air-conditioning is not the norm. But my travels were a reminder of what a beautiful country it is, from the gently rolling landscapes of my native Devon to the historic Tudor houses of East Anglia.

Nuclear visit

I accompanied a visiting delegation on a trip to the nuclear facility in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, where nuclear waste—reprocessed at Sellafield in North-West England for the Japanese utilities—is stored when it comes back to Japan. The scale and rigorous approach to safety is impressive. I noted that nuclear facilities always seem to be located in the most stunning natural landscapes.

The Embassy is currently preparing for the onslaught of visitors in what promises to be an incredibly busy autumn. 🇬🇧



Manga exhibition

In addition to the usual round of calls across Whitehall, I also checked in with the British Olympic and Paralympic Associations, and the UK-Japan 21st Century Group. Sir Richard Lambert (above centre), chairman of the British Museum, took me on a tour of its current blockbuster exhibition on Japanese manga, which is drawing huge numbers of visitors. And I called on the Director of the National Gallery to talk about the high-profile exhibition they are mounting in Japan next year.



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What a year for sport

I got back to Japan just in time to watch Manchester City, who won every trophy available in England last year, playing their sister club Yokohama Marinos. I had just missed Chelsea's Japan tour. What a year for sport here! In August, we are launching our social media campaign on local customs and etiquette, fronted by Japanese stand-up comedian Yuriko Kotani, aimed at the tens of thousands of British rugby fans who will visit this autumn.



Capital battle: work–life balance

Plus our magnificent machines, magazines, musicians and Ms Matsushita

SIMON FARRELL | simon@custom-media.com

When summer holidays arrive, it often signals a quiet period for media and prompts our friends in the communications world to fill the void with their surveys, studies and publicity stunts. Much of it is of limited interest, but in early August I received a number of unusually engaging reports to share with you this silly season.

There's always a surprise or two when comparing London and Tokyo, along with other great cities. *The Best Cities for Work–Life Balance 2019*, a study by US-based mobile access technology company Kisi, reveals how “work intensity, institutional support, legislation and liveability” at 40 top global destinations help citizens achieve holistic parity at work and home.

While easy-going Helsinki, Munich and Oslo top the index, Tokyo, Singapore and Washington D.C. are home to the worst of the workaholics.

Tokyo ranked 39th and London 12th overall, but they both performed equally well for leisure—the “vibrancy and variety of cultural and lifestyle offerings.” The score combines cultural city rankings, the number employed in cultural and creative industries, and leisure activities such as restaurants, parks, shops, entertainment and nightlife. London was first, followed by Tokyo, then New York.

And the first two also come close on:

- Stress: Tokyo 17th, London 18th
- Safety: Tokyo second, London 14th
- Work hours: 42.5 and 42.1, respectively

Tokyo, however, is relatively overworked:

- It scores highest for overall “work intensity,” whereas London ranks 29th
- Staff are offered 10 paid vacation days per annum, compared to London’s 28
- But the average number of such days actually used here is 9.8; London? 24.8
- Some 20% of employees in Tokyo work at least 48 hours per week, twice that of Londoners
- The jobless rate in Tokyo is 2.6%; London’s is 4.8%
- Tokyo languishes at 36th for LGBT+ Equality while London proudly claims third

Magic of magazines

It was good to see officially confirmed what some of us have known for ages: that “magazines are rated more favourably than any other news source for quality, accuracy, trustworthiness and impartiality.”

Ofcom—the UK’s regulatory and competition authority for the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal industries—studied how adults and older children in the UK access news.

It’s latest annual news consumption report also finds that social media was rated least favourably, with only 37% of people who use it for news saying they thought it was impartial, compared with 78% of magazine consumers, 62% for TV, 61% for radio and 58% for print newspapers.

GREATest flight

According to a Swiss luxury watch maker, a refurbished WWII Spitfire (left) has just embarked on

“Extraordinary projects such as this are exactly what the GREAT campaign is there to promote”



PHOTO BY REMY STEINER / GETTY IMAGES FOR IWC



Our congratulations go to another remarkable Japanese woman in control of a major UK firm: Kyoko Matsushita.

I don't know if the Spitfire will get here in time for the Rugby World Cup, but we hope to catch them after they safely land and will give you a full report.

Women leaders

So soon after the sad demise of Haruno Yoshida in June, our congratulations go to another remarkable Japanese woman in control of a major UK firm. Kyoko Matsushita (left) is the new global chief executive of Essence, the London-founded media agency for Google, L'Oreal and BT, where Haruno was Japan president and CEO.

According to a *Campaign Asia* press release, Matsushita joined Essence in 2014 as chief executive for the Asia-Pacific region, and helped to build a network of offices in cities including Delhi, Jakarta, Melbourne, Mumbai, Seoul, Singapore, Sydney and Tokyo. She was awarded a certificate of excellence in the CEO of the Year category at *Campaign Asia's* Women Leading Change Awards 2018 in Singapore.

Armed with a master's degree from the London School of Economics, she will lead Essence's 1,800 global staff from San Francisco in English, Japanese, German and Spanish. 🍀

the world's longest flight and, organiser Sam Dibley told me, will visit Japan along the way. Piloted by two Britons, the Silver Spitfire, which was built in 1944 and flew 51 missions, left Sussex on 5 August to tackle arctic, tropical and desert conditions in 30 countries over 43,000km. The plane will require regular refuelling in remote areas not frequented by civilian aircraft.

Dr Liam Fox MP (North Somerset)—himself an occasional visitor to Tokyo and popular speaker

at British Chamber of Commerce in Japan events as Secretary of State for International Trade (2016-19)—said: "The Spitfire is an iconic symbol of world-class aerospace engineering, and I'm delighted to see this unique piece of British history brought to a global audience. Extraordinary projects such as this are exactly what the GREAT campaign is there to promote—showcasing the best of Britain to the world, encouraging people to visit, study and do business here."



Ageing rockers

Finally, following the Fuji Rock Festival in late July (page 36), August was a great month for 1980s British music in Japan, with Howard Jones, aged 55, and Nick Lowe (left), 70, both having gigs at Billboard Live in Tokyo Midtown. Looking unrecognisable from their publicity shots, Bristol-based electro-pop pioneer Jones marked the 35th anniversary of perhaps his most famous hit, "Hide and Seek," while *Jesus of Cool* Lowe ("I Love the Sound of Breaking Glass" and "Cruel to Be Kind") shared with us how his rockabilly number "Tokyo Bay" was inspired by the long and lonely drive to Narita International Airport with two other band members, now both sadly passed away. What is often lost on people is that the tongue-in-cheek lyrics present the bay as a romantic spot tinged with palm trees and coral reefs—not the reality of rusted wrecks and industrial gloom.

MEDIA

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EU FINES HELLO KITTY €6.2MN

Sanrio Co., Ltd., the owners of the famous British talking cat and other beloved Japanese children’s characters, has been hit with a fine of €6.2mn (¥762mn) by the European Union (EU). As reported in a 7 July article in *The Asahi Shimbun*, the penalty is for restricting cross-border online sales of toys and

merchandise. The EU Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager, said Sanrio’s practices could lead to “less choice and higher prices for consumers, and is against EU antitrust rules”. The investigation began in 2017 as part of the EU’s hope for a “digital single market”.



FIRST JAPANESE PEOPLE IN ENGLAND

Thomas Lockley, a Japan-based British professor at Nihon University College of Law in Tokyo, is close to finishing years of comprehensive research on the largely forgotten tale of the first Japanese people to visit England. In a 4 June story in *The Mainichi*, Lockley expressed how important the Japanese were to the English in 1589. These visitors made Japan “real” and not just the talk of dreamers. Lockley said his work has attracted interest from potential publishers.

PRINCE CHARLES TO VISIT TOKYO

Although Emperor Naruhito ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne on 1 May, the formal enthronement will not take place until 22 October. At the request of the British Government, Charles will represent Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at the ceremony, the *Evening Standard* reported on 13 August. During the two-day visit, the Prince will participate in events that celebrate UK-Japan connections. His last visit to Japan was in 2008.



SMILING CINDERELLA WINS WOMEN'S BRITISH OPEN

Hinako Shibuno, the 20-year-old golfer who had only been outside Japan once before competing in this year's Women's British Open at Woburn Golf and Country Club near Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire, captured not only the title but also the hearts of the UK crowd. As *The Guardian* reported on 4 August, Shibuno's bright attitude, high-fiving of spectators and penchant for snacking her way around the links earned her the nickname Smiling Cinderella. And as in the story, it was a last-minute turn of events that brought on a fairy-tale ending as Shibuno sank a putt from 18ft to edge out American Lizette Salas by one stroke in her major championship debut. She is the first Japanese golfer to win the Women's British Open.

ABE ASKS UK TO AVOID NO-DEAL BREXIT

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has implored British Prime Minister Boris Johnson not to take a no-deal exit from the European Union (EU). In a 24 July story, *The Japan Times* said the request was included in a message congratulating Johnson on his election. Abe advised Johnson to continue cooperating with leaders of the business world. Abe said he hopes to see an efficient Brexit that minimises the impact on Japan-affiliated firms in Britain. Johnson has vowed to leave the EU with or without a deal.

TEAM GB TO BRING MOST FANS TO TOKYO

Great Britain is expected to garner the most support of a visiting nation at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games according to a 23 July story in *The Telegraph*. Team GB, which saw only 280 fans follow them to Rio de Janeiro on official travel packages in 2016, has received more than 4,000 enquiries for Tokyo 2020 packages. To boost numbers, Team GB is generating local support around its training facilities, including the performance lodge at Odaiba Bay High School, Yokohama International Pool—where British swimmers and divers are preparing—as well as Keio University and the Todoroki Stadium. All these venues are already posting locally made signs that read "GO-GB2020".



PHOTO: NAOMI BAKER

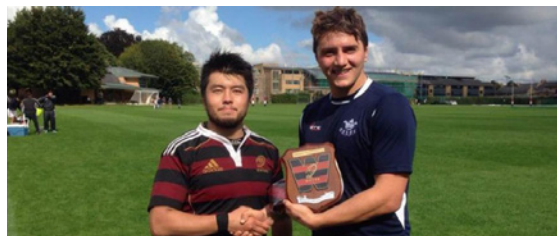
NEWS BRIEFS



SKATEBOARD PRODIGY EYES TOKYO OLYMPICS

Half-British, half-Japanese Sky Brown, an 11-year-old skateboarder who calls Japan home, has been added to Great Britain's national team. Skateboarding will make its Olympic debut at the Tokyo 2020 Games. Brown will be 12 when the Olympics take place and, if Team GB qualifies for the competition, she will be the youngest ever British Olympian. (CBS News, 2 August)

OXFORD PICKS WASEDA



To coincide with the Rugby World Cup 2019, organisers at the University of Oxford chose Waseda University in Tokyo as hosts the World University Rugby Invitational Tournament 2019, to be held in September. Founded by Oxford in 2015, the crowdfunded tournament was created to generate more attention in the game at the university level. As of 15 August, ¥6.26mn had been raised, 125% of the ¥5mn goal. (J.Funding, 15 August)

BILATERAL HONOURS WON IN SOUTH KOREA

Japan's Katsuhiro Matsumoto and Britain's Duncan Scott won silver and bronze respectively at the International Swimming Federation World Championships, held 12–28 July in Gwangju, South Korea. Matsumoto set the Japan 200m freestyle record, but was overshadowed by the controversy surrounding Duncan Scott's podium protest of gold medallist Sun Yang of China, who is facing a lifetime suspension for test meddling in 2018. (*The Mainichi*, 24 July)

WHAT JAPAN THINKS OF BREXIT AND BOJO

BY MARK SCHREIBER

The 6 August edition of *Newsweek Japan* included a nine-page special outlining the political changes in Britain. The report, perhaps understandably, devoted as much to Brexit as it did to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, also known as BoJo. The following introduces some key points made in three essays from the special, summarised from Japanese.

As the introduction to the *Newsweek* coverage pointed out, “Since his youth, Boris Johnson was known to be an arch enemy of the European Union”. Come 31 October—if not sooner—what takes place in Britain may hold major repercussions not only for the economies of the UK, but also for the European Union (EU) and its trading partners. And that includes Japan.

To prepare for what is to come, it is important for Japan to understand Johnson. The special’s lead story, by journalist William Underhill, purports to explain Britain’s “charismatic” new prime minister as he attempts to navigate his nation into these uncharted waters.

Conviction or opportunity

“The citizens of the UK cannot trust the new resident of Number 10 Downing Street,” asserts

Underhill, pointing to the sense of scepticism that persists. Does Johnson himself truly believe that leaving the EU is the right thing to do? Or, is he merely an opportunist wafted along on the winds of popular sentiment?

Those who dislike Johnson are wont to think it’s more likely the latter, and inclined to believe what BoJo really craves is power. But even those who like the man don’t necessarily trust him. Max Hastings, Johnson’s boss at *The Daily Telegraph*, has, on numerous occasions, despaired his “contempt for the truth.”

Underhill nevertheless resists the urge to indulge in pessimism. Yes, he writes, the economy following Brexit may very well go through a rough patch. But after the passage of one year, perhaps, there’s sufficient likelihood that the British economy will turn itself around and develop new markets. The reported affinity between Johnson and US

President Donald Trump may smooth the forging of new trade arrangements between the two countries.

The Johnson Effect

Also in the special, in an essay entitled “The Johnson Effect,” *The Daily Telegraph*’s former Tokyo bureau chief Colin Joyce touches on the new prime minister’s reputation as a polymath, fluent in French and familiar with classical languages, which he pursued at the University of Oxford. As a journalist, Johnson has applied his broad range of interests to everything from ancient Rome to Winston Churchill to the automotive industry.

“To someone who’s not British—and particularly those outside of the English-speaking sphere—it is difficult to explain Johnson’s talents,” Joyce writes. He clearly admires Johnson for his skills at turns of phrase, such as “inverted pyramid of piffle,” and praises his remarkable ability to present complicated or mundane themes in ways that are both easy to comprehend and entertaining. An example is a 2003 column in which Johnson wrote that Parliament might “be properly matched—each House flawless in its own way”. It is a solution he



The reported affinity between Johnson and US President Donald Trump may smooth the forging of new trade arrangements between the two countries.



Johnson’s refusal to knuckle under to the political correctness that constrains most UK politicians ... serves to convey an image of him as a flesh-and-blood person unafraid to say what’s on his mind or to crack a joke.

called “as beautiful as the two halves of the rear end of Kylie Minogue”.

Politically incorrect

Likewise, Johnson’s refusal to knuckle under to the political correctness that constrains most UK politicians—his oft-quoted observation of women wearing burkas as resembling “letterboxes” being an example—serves to convey an image of him as a flesh-and-blood person unafraid to say what’s on his mind or to crack a joke. Yet, in contrast with Denmark and France, which have enacted laws banning Muslim attire, Johnson demonstrated his liberal streak, defending wearers in the UK.

The key to Johnson’s appeal, writes Joyce, lies with his ability to get ordinary citizens involved in politics and voting on the issues.

For that reason alone, he cannot be regarded as an ordinary politician.

Business impact

A third essay in *Newsweek*, by UK-based Japanese journalist Masato Kimura, is entitled “How Japanese firms will cope.” Certainly, they shudder at the prospect of a no-deal Brexit, which they fear would paralyse corporate activities. Dire predictions include devaluation of the pound sterling and a drop of gross domestic product and wages by as much as 11%.

One out of two passenger cars manufactured in the UK carries a Japanese nameplate, and Honda and Nissan have already taken steps to cut back on production. A source at Toyota expressed anxiety at how his firm’s environmental models—being dependent on EU regulations—may face reduced demand if 10% tariffs are applied. This would leave Britain “completely outside the mosquito net”. In other words, excluded. Even native firms are taking pre-emptive action to soften the blow. Home appliance maker Dyson Ltd., for example, has moved its headquarters to Singapore and

shifted manufacturing to Malaysia and other countries with lower labour costs compared with the UK.

Gathering storm

A Japanese person who had worked in finance in London is quoted in Kimura’s piece as saying, “Considering the English language, securing human resources and its global reach, I once believed nothing could shake London from its superior position”. But sensing the gathering storm clouds, he returned home to Japan and opened a restaurant. “When I converted the pounds I’d saved into Japanese yen, I was heartbroken”.

Japanese firms continue to globalise and operate from various locations in Europe. While making adjustments in terms of their sales, operating costs and taxes, they are mulling strategies that will hopefully absorb the shock of a no-deal Brexit.

In recent years, Japanese corporations have accounted for about 30% of direct investment in the UK—far more than the US. In the event of a no-deal Brexit, these firms can expect to suffer considerably. 🇬🇧

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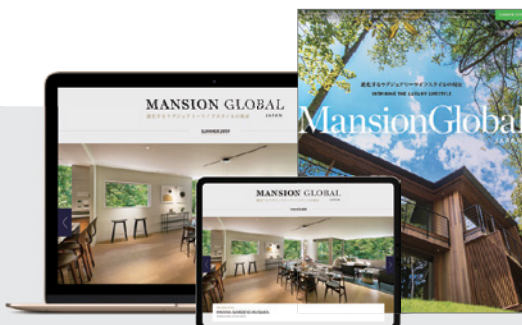
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Excited about BBA

Summer sets the stage to honour excellence

LORI HENDERSON MBE

Between wrapping up our successful Travel and Tourism Think Tank on 29 July and the beginning of the summer holidays, we were excited to announce this year's British Business Awards (BBA) categories. This comes just as we've allocated more than 65% of seats for our headliner black tie gala on 8 November, which will mark the 70th anniversary year of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ).

For 12 years, the BBA has celebrated excellence and promoted cross-industry success, as well as showcased firms which have made important social contributions through their commitment to community and ethical behaviour. Our BBA judges will be looking for winners who have, over the past 12 months, shown commitment to the core pillars of BCCJ 5.0: Diversity & Inclusivity, Digital & Technological Innovation and Responsible Business.

For the 10th year, Kate Thomson of Ukishima Sculpture Studio will create custom BBA trophies for:

Company of the Year

Nominees are required to show excellence across all aspects of their organisation in Japan, focusing on outstanding achievements over the past 12 months.

UK-Japan Partnership

Nominees should be joint ventures, alliances or other partnerships that have made demonstrable contributions to the enhancement of the UK-Japan economic or commercial relationship.

For 12 years, the BBA has celebrated excellence and promoted cross-industry success.

Entrepreneur of the Year

Nominees should be individuals who exemplify entrepreneurialism and have created commercial success through an entrepreneurial spirit. Nominees will typically be leading non-listed organisations in Japan with 25 employees or fewer.

Positive Impact

Open to any eligible firm that has driven exceptionally effective social/environmental programmes or initiatives in Japan. This could include diversity and inclusion activities.

Innovation

Open to any eligible firm that has driven exceptionally effective digital and technological innovation, services or solutions in Japan.

The deadline for nominations is noon on 18 October. For more information on submitting a BBA nomination, visit www.bccjapan.com

Experiences

One of the many highlights of the BBA is the dazzling array of prizes generously donated by our member firms. This year, we have invited prize sponsors to

offer experiences rather than "things," in line with a move towards the experiential economy.

It's been shown that offline, real-world experiences lead to more personal growth and spur social connections. Through this year's BBA, we aim to foster meaningful engagement by connecting donors with recipients.

Thank you so much to every firm that's donated a prize so far.

A big thanks also to our main event sponsors:

- Robert Walters Japan K.K. (Gold)
- STH Japan K.K. (Gold)
- SI-UK (Study in the UK) (Bronze)

Thanks to their support, we're now working to create a fabulous BBA experience.

Want to join them? BBA2019 sponsorship packages are still available. For more information, please email me at lori@bccjapan.com

Refresh

The BCCJ office closed for the first two weeks of August and I'm currently writing this column from Fiji. BULA! I hope you and yours have enjoyed a relaxing, peaceful and cool summer season, and are feeling ready for the buzz of the Rugby World Cup 2019, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the official Imperial Enthronement Ceremony on 22 October and—of course—the BBA! 🍀

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Watchword: teamwork

As rugby nears, summer brings business opportunities

DAVID BICKLE | @BCCJ_President

There is just one month to go before Japan kicks off the Rugby World Cup 2019 tournament on 20 September with its match against Russia at Tokyo Stadium. As participating teams finalise their preparations with a series of warm-up matches, there have been some surprising results as the top-seeded countries jostle for advantage. Just like in business, where volatility can provide unexpected opportunities for profit, tournament organisers will doubtless be hoping that recent upsets will trigger a publicity dividend.

Close to home, we have seen Wales come tantalisingly close to taking the number-one spot in the world rankings from perennially powerful New Zealand. As it is, Wales, Ireland and England approach the tournament ranked second, third and fourth respectively. Scotland is holding steady in seventh place and—to the delight of host country fans—Japan's recent wins see it ease back into the world's top 10.

Summer sharing

Teamwork will be the watchword in the coming months, and the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) took this as a cue to up its game with a number of event collaborations with partner organisations in July. First, I was delighted to be invited to address the members of the British Market

Just like in business, where volatility can provide unexpected opportunities for profit, tournament organisers will doubtless be hoping that recent upsets will trigger a publicity dividend.

Council (BMC), giving a presentation entitled “The Role of the BCCJ in Supporting UK-Japan Business Relations in the Year of Japan's Rugby World Cup”.

The BMC was originally formed by representatives of Japan's trading houses, and this was, therefore, a valuable opportunity to gauge the current business sentiments of a number of important investors in the British market. It was also an honour to share the platform with representatives of BCCJ member firm Barclays and the UK Department of Trade and Industry, who shared insights respectively on the global economy and the UK food and beverage sector.

Building connections

Second, the BCCJ was pleased this year to co-host its annual summer networking event with our partners from the Japan-British Society. Most pleasing for me was the chance to meet with the large number of Anglophiles present who wish to build their networks, but are not yet formally affiliated with either organisation. This,

after all, is the primary purpose of our networking events—to encourage the formation of peer group networks and to stimulate conversations between individuals and organisations. Through dialogue we build trust, and with trust we hope to nurture business opportunities.

Notwithstanding the timing of announcements from the Japan Meteorological Agency, it felt to me that the day of the event marked the end of Japan's rainy season. Soaked in a downpour in the morning, then desiccated by blazing sunshine in the afternoon, I remarked to guests on how the UK and Japan are both blessed to enjoy increasingly fickle and changeable weather. Ultimately, however, there are at least as many ways in which our countries are different as they are similar. The spark for conversation, though—whether it be a shared perspective or a different viewpoint—is unimportant. What matters is that there is dialogue, an exchange of views and, from there, an appreciation of (and desire to commonly pursue) our shared interests. 🇬🇧

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TECH TALENT

RGF PR helps firms
meet the digital challenge

RGF
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Recruitment

The rise of the digital economy—together with rapid technological advancements—has created dynamic challenges for employers and job candidates. Areas such as fintech, artificial intelligence (AI), cloud and internet services, streaming entertainment and e-commerce are changing what is considered the ideal hire and redefining the needed skill set. RGF Professional Recruitment Japan (RGF PR), a bilingual recruitment arm of Recruit Group, is evolving to meet those needs.

Recruit Group is the largest recruiting and information service firm in Japan and Asia, and the fourth largest in the world. This puts RGF PR in prime position to help Japan-based firms transform their workforce and thrive in a tech-rich future. To find out how they are helping businesses, *ACUMEN* spoke with Simon Elsom, RGF PR's director of financial services, human resources (HR), office administration, finance and accounting, and legal.

Skills shift

The digitalisation of our world brings challenges across the full spectrum of HR, Elsom said. "Japan continues to be a candidate-short market, especially where bilingual or multilingual skills are required. The development and launch of new tech products and services require the recruitment of employees with new, niche programming skills. This makes attracting and securing the best talent extremely competitive," he added. "In response to growing demand in these areas, we now have function-specialised, dedicated teams focusing on digital front end, back end, robotics, AI and data."

But it isn't just programmers that are needed. "We are seeing particularly high demand for strong researchers, those with coding and development skills, and engineers in mobile, AI and blockchain," Elsom said. "With our clients in the retail sector, there has been a significant increase in e-commerce operations—an area

especially short of experienced candidates with relevant expertise."

While finding the right people for hands-on development is important, equally so is tech literacy at the highest levels of management. "Even those in non-technical roles, such as chief financial officers and chief human resources officers, are increasingly required to be tech friendly to ensure continued competitiveness and steadfast growth," said Elsom.

RGF PR's extensive reach puts firms in touch with a rich pool of talented and insightful leaders who can transform existing workflows and approaches, bringing them in line with the needs of the digital economy.

Flexibility

Beyond how we sell and purchase, technology has changed how we work. From a talent and hiring perspective, it has turned a pond into an ocean, exponentially increasing the number of candidates.

"The ability for jobs to be advertised around the globe at the touch of a button, the convenience of online applications and the accessibility of candidate assessment via video conferencing apps are bringing more flexibility to the hiring landscape," Elsom explained. "Through the vast infrastructure of RGF and the Recruit Group—including our global offices and regional websites—we have access to the largest candidate pool in the market."

This distance also plays into another important focus in today's business world: work-life balance. RGF PR supports this by working with clients who offer flexible arrangements, be it permanent, temporary or contract.

Remote roles

Of course, working from afar is increasingly an option, and is a great way for firms to boost their capabilities while benefiting from a happier workforce.

"In contrast to traditionally being located in the same physical office space, the increase in the number of remote working practices is quite evident. Being geographically located around the globe, this requires an increased need for various language abilities as well as more flexible working hours due to regional time differences," Elsom said.

"Within tech specific roles, many people prefer to be contractors—working on fixed-term projects and then taking several months off before their next challenge. Covering both permanent and temporary recruitment services, RGF PR is uniquely positioned to advise on the benefits of each approach, and to offer fuller, more flexible recruitment solutions according to the individual needs of our clients."

And, away from the recruitment process itself, candidates are often attracted to flexible working arrangements and other non-standard benefits or financial rewards.

New horizons

Elsom also said that RGF PR is seeing greater global talent mobility, with an increase in the number of employees recruited from overseas. This is particularly true in the tech space, which includes Japanese nationals who have experience overseas but wish to return to Japan as well as non-Japanese who wish to broaden their professional experience in Japan. "Through the Recruit Group's vast regional infrastructure for Japanese-speaking candidates—which includes more than 50 offices in the Asia-Pacific region and various recruitment portals—RGF PR can help our clients access this Japanese-speaking talent pool."

And that is where working with a trusted third-party such as RGF PR can make all the difference between success and failure. Japan may be a candidate-short market, but the talent is out there. The challenge is finding it. With RGF PR at your side, that challenge might not be as daunting as it first seems. 🌸

TRAVEL TOURISM THINK TANK: RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

BY AARON BAGGETT



PHOTO: C BRYAN JONES

In 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced an ambitious target for inbound tourism: 40mn visitors by 2020—double the number in 2015. The efforts got quick results. Boosted by major upcoming events such as the Rugby World Cup 2019, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the World Expo 2025 to be held in Osaka, a new goal of 60mn by 2030 was set. While this is great for the economy—total revenue from tourism increased to ¥4.5tn in 2018—residents are less than thrilled by the sudden influx of visitors crowding their streets and favourite shops.

On 29 July, the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan launched the Travel Tourism Think Tank with an event entitled Responsible Tourism at Tokyo American Club. Adam Fulford, chief executive of Fulford Enterprises, moderated a panel of experts from the global tourism industry who discussed Japan’s tourism boom, the problems that come with it and possible solutions.

Three Ds

Ruth Marie Jarman, chief executive of Jarman International K.K., said the panel was an opportunity to brainstorm on how things could be better managed in the tourism industry. To help focus the discussion, she introduced three keywords:

- Discovery
- Dissemination
- Development

Tourists should be given the chance to discover new destinations in Japan, and the tourism industry should help them do this. When they journey down these roads less travelled, it can be a surprising experience for the locals as well as they interact with someone who has discovered their community for the first time.

Dissemination, Jarman explained, refers not only to the spread of information, but also to the dissemination of people—getting tourists to visit

parts of Japan other than the major cities, so that everyone is not congregated in the same location.

And then there is development. How can tourism lead to the revival of rural communities? “One of the ways to bolster the [local] economy is to get new customers to travel to new areas,” Jarman said, citing this as the biggest challenge the industry faces. “Everything is connected now, and we are the connectors”.

When we talk about responsible tourism, we have to talk about sustainable tourism. Engaging the communities is one of the most important ways to do it.



Ruth Marie Jarman—three Ds

PHOTO: C BRYAN JONES



Ten organisations showcased experiences and services.

- Camping with Soul
- Candlewick
- JTB Sky Hop Bus
- Kagoshima Tourism
- MENEX
- Shimadzu
- Japan Travel K.K.
- Walk Japan
- Japan National Tourism Organisation
- Japan Tourism Agency

Local calling

One answer proposed by Hans Heijligers, CEO of IHG ANA Hotels Group Japan LLC, is community engagement. “When we talk about responsible tourism, we have to talk about sustainable tourism. Engaging the communities is one of the most important ways to do it,” he said. “Right now, the centre of tourism is very much focused on the triangle—Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto—whereas there are so many other opportunities”.

Heijligers cited his firm’s newest regional property, the ANA InterContinental Beppu Resort & Spa in Oita Prefecture, as an example. “All the produce is bought within a 50km radius,” he said. “We can be an active part of building that responsible and sustainable model”.

Fulford asked what positive impact a regional hotel might have on the community. Heijligers said that it takes collaboration between the business, the community and a really supportive local government. A hotel can also provide more job opportunities. “Most of the people we employ are actually from the community,” he said.

Regional draw

Compared with the Western market, domestic travel to the countryside is not as popular in Japan. Naohiro Fukawa, director of Tourism Shizuoka, said

one of the challenges is the lack of understanding in the local community of what tourism is. “Regional communities tend to see tourism as friendship exchange, not a business opportunity”.

Britain has been very successful with bringing tourists to the countryside. Sharing her perspective on why this is so, Tomoko Hisaki of Visit Britain, the UK’s national tourism agency, said that, historically, Brits prefer to live in the countryside and work in the city. This is not the case in Japan.

How we travel

Another topic discussed was infrastructure. This includes not just physical infrastructure, but also how we travel. Heijligers said that domestic travel in Japan lives and dies in peaks. “We have these enormous peaks at certain times of the year when everything gets inundated with people and traffic jams, and rates are incredibly high. Then we have these long periods of very low business when the infrastructure isn’t used.

The panel suggested this was partly due to Japan’s holiday calendar. During long stretches such as Golden Week in May and Obon in August, the entire country goes on holiday all at once.

It’s a different story in Europe, for example, where holidays are less concentrated and spread out over the year. “You don’t want a small village suddenly inundated with thousands and thousands of people hopping off buses and throwing CO₂ into the air,” Heijligers said.

“One of our goals is to reduce our carbon footprint. The tourism industry—and hotels in particular—are not good business when it comes

to carbon footprint. We have to make conscious efforts to consistently reduce that”.

How and when the industry builds is also important, Heijligers said. Property development in Japan should not be underestimated. It is vital for the tourism industry to work with developers and construction firms to create sustainable buildings.

Tourists as contributors

The last point of discussion was the importance of bringing the right product to the right people—specifically to the Western market. “That market is really looking to connect culturally with destinations,” said Heijligers.

Visitors have the opportunity to engage with regional Japan in mindful and responsible ways. “People are coming to Japan to find humanity. That is an underlining attraction to this beautiful place,” added Jarman.

Fulford brought the discussion to a close by connecting the destination with the visitor. “If I was going to summarise what Japan has that maybe other countries do not have, it is a mind for the other. Tourists are very much consumers; but we could be contributors”.

He mentioned that, the day before the event, he had been part of a group of visitors to a small rural community in the mountains of Yamagata Prefecture. After a festival, they stayed to work alongside the community, who were grateful to have visitors from outside of the community helping them.

“That is key to the future of responsible tourism at the local level,” he said. “So much experience comes out of that encounter”.



PHOTO: CRYAN JONES

CRUISE OR LOSE

Japan's love of British culture helps sea voyage sector

BY AARON BAGGETT

Life is short, the world is wide, and the recent global cruise trend isn't slowing down. According to the latest market reports from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the sea voyage industry generated more than \$134bn in 2017 and continued its strong performance in 2018. More than 2mn UK and Irish citizens went on cruises in 2018, a 2% rise from

the previous year. Japan saw growth, too. A 4.6% increase year over year makes Japan Asia's fourth largest cruise market, accounting for 14.8% of the global market.

The industry is projected to grow globally by 6% in 2019, with some 30mn travellers expected to take to the sea. Twenty-four new ships will make their maiden voyages in 2019, breaking the world

record for new ship introductions. Among these are the *Venezia* and the *Smeralda* from Costa Cruises, the *Panorama* from Carnival Cruise Line and the *Sky Princess* from Princess Cruises, which will be docking in Yokohama during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

To learn more about the growth in Japan—and the UK connection—ACUMEN spoke to industry leaders.



Time to relax?

The CLIA data suggests that travel has changed. Vacationers want achievement-based tourism, checking off a goal-oriented item from their bucket list rather than just sightseeing. Of course, people still expect to relax and check out from work and responsibilities.

For younger Japanese workers, finding time to get away can be difficult. The typical age for Japanese cruise-goers is 57—some 10 years older than the global average.

“The popularity is increasing, but the cruise industry in Japan is still 20 years behind compared with more mature markets such as the UK, Europe and North America,” Shin Asai, commercial director for Cunard Line, told *ACUMEN*. “For many Japanese, their perception of cruise travel is that it’s expensive and takes too long, which is not quite true when you look at the prices for our voyages of seven to eight days.”

A work culture that values long hours in the office, and typically frowns on long vacations, compounds the problem. “The main reason for the age difference is the length of vacation that Japanese people normally take,” said Kengo Kuno, Asia-Pacific regional sales manager for Japan at Norwegian cruise operator Hurtigruten, Inc. “The younger generation is not able to take long holidays. They prefer shorter itineraries—for cultural reasons. I have been trying to encourage travel agents to take those key points into account.”

The industry is projected to grow globally by 6% in 2019, with some 30mn travellers expected to take to the sea.



Close to home

The CLIA’s *2018 Asia Ocean Source Market Report* supports this. Although Japanese passengers choose destinations outside Asia more often than those from other countries in the region, more than 75% prefer to stay in Asia.

“We’ve had more than a thousand Japanese passengers for our Norway Coastal cruises go to see the northern lights, but it’s still such a small number of passengers for expedition destinations,” said Kuno. “The number of Japanese passengers interested in Antarctica, Svalbard, Iceland and Greenland, however, is increasing.”

On average, Japanese passengers vacation for no more than six days. Most popular are tours of two or three days (31% of bookings), a preference that has increased steadily year after year. Older travellers are more likely to take longer holidays, but the industry will have to change perceptions of cruise travel if it wants to tap into the markets for Generation X (those born between 1966 and 1976) and Millennials (those born between 1977 and the mid-1990s).

“People just don’t take customary long holidays in Japan,” said Asai. “We can’t change that, but we try to really communicate the ease of travel and the value for the variety of onboard activities, such as visiting the theatre, shopping arcade and casino.”

Easy departure

Cunard is also hoping to attract more passengers with trips leaving directly from Japan. Guests can



choose shorter trips around the country for as few as seven nights or adventurous Transpacific voyages to Alaska, which last nearly 20 days.

“We just started home deployments out of Yokohama this year. There are only two right now, but next year we will go to up four. Plus, we’ll do three out of Tokyo, from Odaiba, in autumn. Tokyo is building a new cruise terminal in Odaiba, so we’ll have seven departures out of Japan starting in 2020,” said Asai.

Eiko Kijima, president of Tokyo-based Cruise Vacations, Inc. noted a growing interest among Japanese media. “Recently, cruises are introduced on TV programs and in newspaper advertisements. People’s interest is gradually increasing. The number of participants departing from Japan has also risen—especially during the summer vacation time. We are seeing an increase in younger generations and families with young children as well, and are expecting 500,000 cruise passengers per year by 2020.”

Japan experience

One cruise ship trying to appeal to—rather than change—the Japanese perception of cruises is Hiroshima-based Guntû. More akin to a floating



ryokan rather than an ocean liner, the little 19-room ship drifts along the Seto Inland Sea. Named after the tiny blue crabs found in the area, Guntû offers a more leisurely experience that is different from typical cruise travel. And that is part of the draw. As their website says, “Time passes slowly onboard”.

Award-winning Japanese architect Yasushi Horibe crafted the ship’s beautiful minimalistic design. “It’s what distinguishes Guntû from the categories of a boat, ship or luxury yacht,” said Shinichi Meguro. “It is the first-ever floating *ryokan*, launched in October 2017 to uncover the allure of Japan’s Setouchi—the Seto Inland Sea and the coastal areas of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu”.

Wood is prominently used throughout the ship, with walnut and Japanese cypress providing a warm, golden aesthetic. Four cabin types, with views close to water level, allow passengers to gaze across the sea to the surrounding mountains. There are even open-air baths.

Guntû features amenities you would expect from a traditional Japanese inn, such as a tearoom, communal bathhouse and sauna, as well as modern offerings, such as a gym and cocktail

bar. Master chefs from Shigeyoshi and Nobu, two reputable Japanese restaurants, lead the ship’s onboard meal services.

But even more can be found on the tiny islands that dot Setouchi. Excursions off the ship to explore how the locals live is what Guntû says is “the real pleasure of travelling with them”. Activities include morning walks along beautiful shorelines, viewing ancient temples, experiencing festivals and even going on friendly jaunts with local fishermen.

Keeping today’s tight schedules in mind, Guntû offers tours of one, two or three nights. Different routes are available throughout the year—from the shores of Miyajima and Omishima Island to Takuma Bay and Tomonoura—all of which are special in their own way.

British experience

For those who want a non-Japanese experience, British-American cruise operator and British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) member firm Cunard Line has recently detailed plans to focus more on Japan operations. The firm has been building a reputation in Japan for three

decades, ever since the world famous British luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth 2* was moored here as a hotel ship in 1989 and 1990 to celebrate the 130th anniversary of the Port of Yokohama.

Kijima, who was the organiser for the 1989–90 visit, shared her thoughts on the significance of that event. “The chartering of the *Queen Elizabeth 2* as a hotel ship was unforgettable. They moored her at the Port of Yokohama, as well as at Harumi Port in Tokyo,” she said. “Many Japanese people still admire the *Queen Elizabeth 2*, and this admiration is something I think only Japanese people have. This nostalgia for the *Queen Elizabeth* persists today for the third”.

Cunard prides itself in offering a distinct British experience in multiple ways. “We offer British heritage on our ships, and that is what Japanese guests are expecting, from the onboard pub where passengers can enjoy fish and chips to British-style afternoon tea and our formal nights, where everyone dresses up in formal attire,” said Asai. “We also have theme nights, such as our masquerade ball. Everyone on the ship dresses up during these nights, so it’s a really good feeling. What we are selling is atmosphere, and our



Japanese passengers love this. There are usually three of these nights during a 10-day cruise’.

But Cunard doesn’t drop the local flavour entirely. “We understand the importance of attention to detail for Japanese culture, so we also offer Japanese service programmes, ranging from a traditional Japanese breakfast to tours led by Japanese-speaking staff,” Asai added. “During the formal nights, you’ll see many women in kimono, and it’s a beautiful mix of the cultures. Our non-Japanese guests really enjoy this, too”.

At a press conference in April, Cunard representatives celebrated their ventures in Japan. They said that the country is becoming a core market for the firm and that their goal is to grow the line further in the coming years.

“Many Japanese people still admire the *Queen Elizabeth 2*, and this admiration is something I think only Japanese people have”.

“To support our strategic plans, we have seven loops, totalling 61 nights, around Japan in 2020. We expect to see a large proportion of Japanese guests on these,” said the representative. “We are recruiting more Japanese-speaking staff in all service areas of the ship and are ensuring that key communications are translated into Japanese. Most importantly, the core experience will remain unmistakably British. We listen to our guests constantly, and they have shared how important a part of the experience this is to them”.

Port of call

While Japan has been slow to set sail from its own shores, it has become a hot destination for incoming cruises. The CLIA’s *Asia Cruise Trends 2018 Edition* found that Japan ranked first in Asia in 2018 with more than 2,600 calls to port. The busiest ports were Okinawa, Nagasaki and Fukuoka.

The fourth was Yokohama, which has made extensive efforts to attract cruise ships. A new terminal was completed at Daikoku Pier in April, and another at Shinko Pier is scheduled to open this autumn. These new terminals, along with Osanbashi and Yamashita Piers, will allow the Port of Yokohama to host seven vessels at a time by 2021. That will be largest capacity in the world.

Additionally, the city spent ¥95mn to renovate the Skywalk footpath beneath the Yokohama Bay Bridge. The route reopened for the first time in nine years last March, allowing visitors and tourists to see cruise ships and a 360-degree view of the port. City officials said they intend to use the Skywalk for tours and events when Cunard’s *Queen Elizabeth* stops over.

“We work with multiple organisations and destinations around Japan at the national, prefectural and city levels, and have found that any destination that is able to secure strong relationships with cruise liners has a major advantage in

tourism numbers,” said Geoff Day, chief operating officer at BCCJ member firm Japan Travel K.K.

“This can be very beneficial for places that are otherwise a bit difficult to access via traditional tourist routes. One of our clients, Kochi Prefecture, sees ships regularly coming through Kochi City, and each visit brings between 2,500 and 5,000 tourists who spend money in the area. It’s a tremendous boost to the local economy”.

Affluent inbound passengers spend an average of ¥30,000–40,000 at each port, according to an article published in January 2017 by the *Nikkei Asian Review*.

Floating hotels

With the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games fast approaching, some see another use for cruise ships: accommodation. A shortage of hotel rooms has led to fears that the city will not be able to handle the influx of tourists. In an article on the *Japan Today* website in July, a member of the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games said some 46,000 room nights have already been booked, and researchers at the Mizuho Research Institute expect a shortage of up to 14,000 rooms come August 2020.

During their bid to host the Games, Japan pledged to honour the spirit of *omotenashi*, Japan’s special flavour of hospitality. Lack of accommodation will put that commitment into question. Cities such as Yokohama believe the solution lies offshore in the form of anchored cruise ships repurposed as floating hotels.

Five locations have been considered. Among the commissioned ships being moored in Japan is the newly christened *Sun Princess* in Yokohama, chartered by travel agency JTB Corporation. Lodging in one of the ship’s 1,011 cabins for a night will cost from ¥30,000 (£234) to ¥600,000 (£4,671) for the best suites. Also on the way is the *Explorer Dream*, bound for Kawasaki, and the *MSC Lirica* scheduled to dock at Tokyo’s Pier No. 15.

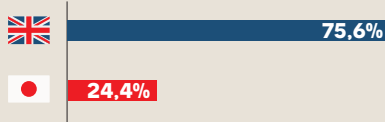
Ocean bound

Whether to supplement hotel capacity for the Olympics or as a way to relieve the stress of modern life, the future looks bright for the cruise industry. And Japan’s love of British culture puts UK firms in prime position to reap the benefits. 🇬🇧

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WRAP MASTER

Iconic London bus becomes Tokyo marketing tool

The red AEC Routemaster is a British icon. Introduced by London Transport in 1954 and built by the Associated Equipment Company and Park Royal Vehicles, the double-decker bus remained in service in London until 2005—outlasting multiple replacements. Even now, the original Routemaster lives on, delighting commuters on a single heritage route in central London. Of the 2,876 Routemasters built between 1954 and 1968, only 1,230 exist today. But as luck would have it, you can find it right here in Japan.

UK dreams

The Routemaster is a key part of the out-of-home (OOH) advertising options offered in Japan by event and promotion firm Tokyo Ride Group. As Shinya Yamamoto, the firm's chief producer, told *ACUMEN*, "The Routemaster is a symbol of Britain, but its design is perfect for Japan."

Yamamoto had been dreaming of seeing the British icon cruising Tokyo streets since he was a young boy. He saw a chance to make that dream come true 35 years ago when he came across a retired Routemaster in Asakusa. "It hadn't been used for a long time. But I envisioned the bus driving on Shibuya streets, making people happy".

Yamamoto rebuilt the bus and started his first campaign in 2006. At first, he found operating the Routemaster difficult. Parts were difficult to find in Japan, and "there were many financial setbacks and tough moments," he said. "But, I just kept imagining seeing the bus on the streets of Shibuya, like London's Piccadilly Circus".

Raise profile

Yamamoto's determination paid off. In 20 years of operation, Tokyo Ride Group has signed more than 15,000 contracts with businesses that see the Routemaster as a fun, inventive way to attract new customers and boost awareness.

Tokyo Ride Group offers custom wrap advertising that leverages the full body and eye-catching nature of the red double-decker to get key messages in front of large groups. The interior can also be



customised for expos and events. "People get worked up when they see such a historical icon in Japan," Yamamoto said. "It's an exciting way to increase consumer awareness".

Indeed, research supports this. Bus advertising is the most-seen outdoor advertising medium according to the London-based research group Transport Focus, and the Out of Home Advertising Association of America has found that vehicle marketing reaches 30,000–70,000 people daily in major cities.

Social buzz

In some cases, Yamamoto explained, campaigns could generate more than 300,000 shares on social media. "There is a tendency for us to spike on social media wherever we go. There is a lot of reach," he said.

"This is what separates us from other advertisers. Passengers genuinely enjoy their experience. It creates organic buzz. They post videos and pictures with positive comments and messages, using hashtags such as #londonbus and the name of the advertiser. Their happy experiences become

authentic, positive branding for the firms that use Tokyo Ride".

Case in point

In one promotion for IBM, the Routemaster was driven to universities in Tokyo, Kobe, Kyoto and Osaka, where it was set up on campus. The bus was fitted with an artificial intelligence system designed to detect job aptitude and give students a chance to discover new career opportunities.

In another successful campaign late last year, Google LLC offered passengers free rides on the upper deck through the streets of Omotesando to view winter illumination. A Google Pixel terminal mounted on the bus linked the street displays with passengers, letting them change the colour of the lights as the bus passed.

Campaigns such as these make Tokyo Ride Group a powerful ally for businesses looking to build brand awareness. Thanks to Yamamoto's childhood dream—and a chance encounter in Asakusa—firms today can promote their products and services in iconic British style on the streets of Japan. 🇬🇧

Interested in using Tokyo Ride for your next business promotion? Email inquiries@custom-media.com

LONDON TOUCH FOR TOKYO LANDMARK

Huge project picks top UK creator

BY ALEC JORDAN

An award-winning British designer has been chosen to design Tokyo's most ambitious redevelopment project since Roppongi Hills opened in 2003. *ACUMEN* was invited to interview Thomas Heatherwick CBE, RDI, HonFREng at Mori Building Co. Ltd.'s groundbreaking ceremony for its 81,000m² Toranomon-Azabudai Project ahead of the official press conference on 22 August. The design will dramatically change the face of the prime commercial and residential area around Kamiyacho and Roppongi Itchome Stations with space for offices, accommodation, shops, a hotel and an international school.



PHOTO: TIA HAYGOOD/LIFE.14

Quick rise

Perhaps the most prominent British designer of his generation, Heatherwick had already made a name for himself within a few years of graduating from the Royal College of Art in 1994. The same year, he founded his own firm, Heatherwick Studio, and by the mid-2000s was designing everything from public art projects to a bridge that could roll up into an octagon.

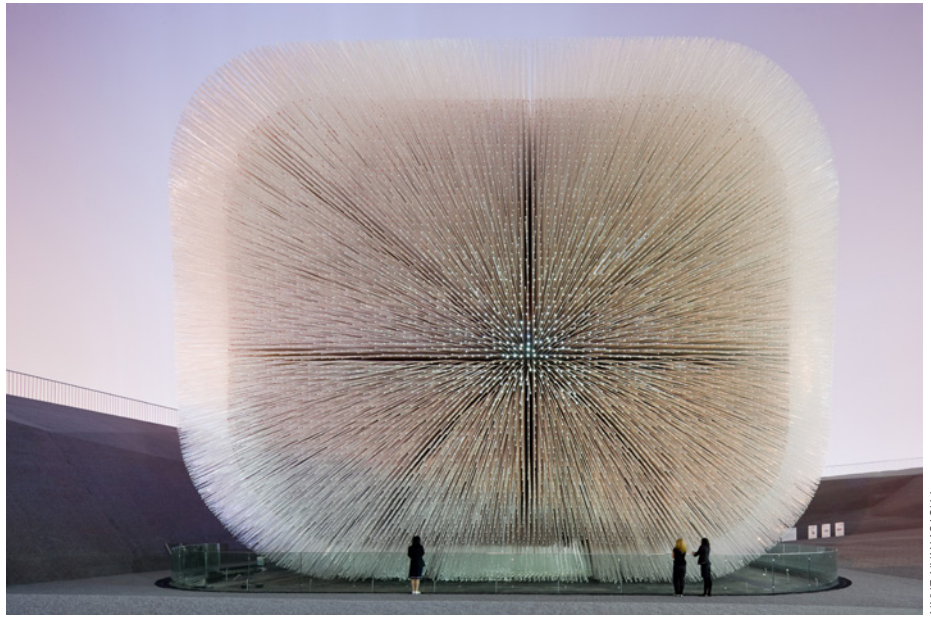
Many of Heatherwick Studio's most prominent projects have been closely linked to Britain's national identity, such as the UK Pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010, the cauldron for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and London's New Routemaster bus.

The studio also has completed projects around the world. These include the Learning Hub at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University and the Bund Finance Centre in Shanghai—a 50/50 collaboration with Foster & Partners. Currently, the studio is working in partnership with the Bjarke Ingels Group to design Google LLC's new headquarters in Mountain View, California, and King's Cross, London.

Meeting Mori

Despite this global reach, Heatherwick Studio didn't have any projects in Japan—until now. The project will spread across three main towers and a number of smaller buildings. Heatherwick Studio is responsible for the landscape design of the entire project, including the 6,000m² central plaza, as well as the design of several iconic structures.

ACUMEN spoke with Heatherwick about the incredible growth of his business, one of his most



Heatherwick designed the UK Pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010

PHOTO: IMAN BAHAN

high-profile endeavours and the impression he wants to make with his first project in Japan.

Why did you become a designer?

I think that, in a way, all children are designers. All children are making things, and doing things, and I'm just an extension of that child who's carried on. The studio, in a way, is like a very large version of my bedroom that I had when I was seven years old. And I was curious and interested in what was possible—that's, in a way, a trait of children. It's also really important when you're designing at the scale of the city. Unless you're curious about why

things are like they are—How do they come to be like that? What does it take to make something happen?—you can't do what we do.

As a child, I remember wondering why so many places I went to were so badly designed, and you just thought, Why is that like that? Why did they do that? But that criticism is a motivator because you then think, well, if you just did this and that it would be better. Criticism leads to ideas, I find. Those thoughts I had when I was little have, in a way, translated into and grown with a great group of collaborators into a system—or a way of developing design ideas in our studio—for very different contexts, whether that's transport infrastructure or pieces of city or particular buildings or even products and parts of buildings.

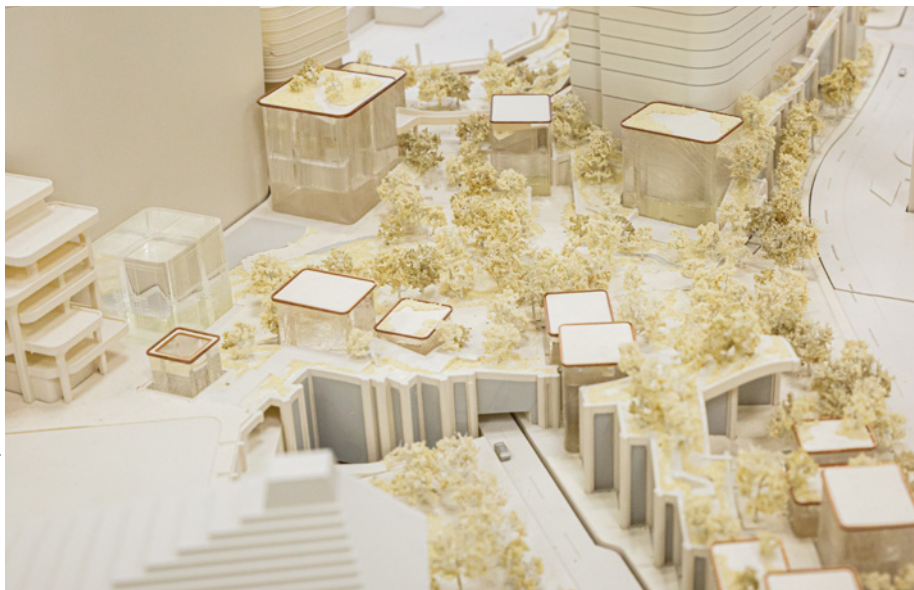


PHOTO: TIA HAYGOOD/LIFE.14

Thomas Heatherwick was born in London in 1970. His grandfather was the son of the owner of Jaeger, the leading London fashion firm, and his uncle was the journalist Nicholas Tomalin. He attended the private Sevenoaks School in Kent, and studied three-dimensional design at Manchester Polytechnic and the Royal College of Art. After graduating and founding Heatherwick Studio in 1994, his mentor, Terence Conran, asked him to make an interior display which led to his first public commission, for the 1997 London Fashion Week at the Harvey Nichols department store.



PHOTO: JASPER WHITE

Heatherwick's London 2012 cauldron comprised 204 pieces that went home with the participating countries.

How do you build a creative business with such longevity?

When I set up the studio—it was 25 years ago, actually, this month—I think that I never set out to build the business at all. I was interested in trying to make things better, and I knew there was a gap that I felt somebody needed to address, and I didn't know who else to work for. I'm genuinely astonished to now have 220 people in my team. That wasn't the goal, and I don't think of it as a business. And I think that might be the key. When people's motivation is business, I think that you're immediately less relevant. But when you have a purpose—and that purpose drives you—you have to be a business in order to do that purpose. But that's just a necessity that you then have to learn. It took me a long time to find great team members and to figure out how to do that. In a sense, my studio has been the biggest project of the past 25 years.

What were your goals for the London 2012 cauldron?

It's exciting to be talking about the Olympic cauldron here in Tokyo when the Games are just one year from now. We were very honoured to be asked to do this important part of the opening ceremony. But we were there thinking this funny

moment where we would design something that was going to be seen by a billion people at the same moment. How do you really connect with those people? And when we looked back at many previous Olympic cauldrons, if you ask someone, Do you remember any Olympic cauldron?, most people would say no. But they do remember how they were lit.

What we realised was that it's actually a moment. It's not a thing. It's a moment. Reflecting on the Olympics, one thing that I find really powerful about them is that we're so used to, in the media, the feeling that the whole world is always arguing with each other and there's always some trouble between this region and that region. And now it's no different. But then, during the Olympics, there's this moment where everyone stops arguing for two weeks and then they carry on arguing afterwards.

We thought about how we could reflect the beauty of 204 countries coming together and not arguing for two weeks. So, we thought, what if our cauldron is gone afterwards? And I just thought, oh, what if every country brings a piece and we'd collaborate for two weeks on making an Olympic cauldron. And then, at the end of that two weeks, each country takes away that piece and takes it back. So, somewhere here in Tokyo now is the piece of the London 2012 Olympic cauldron at

the Japanese Olympic Committee, and there's an Olympic Committee in all the main countries that go into the Olympics. Ours had the most moving parts in the history of all Olympic cauldrons. It had a thousand moving parts. We focused on an invention. Could you make a cauldron out of 204 cauldrons? That was the idea. It felt like it was some sort of poetic relationship to what was happening in a sporting context.

Tokyo has many iconic buildings. Do you have a favourite one?

I think my honest favourite thing is the small houses. I mean, in London, there are not so many special houses. Here people take tiny sites and put all their imagination into them. You feel imagination popping up in these different projects that are done.

And I cherish that. I think that, in the US certainly, everyone assumes you must have big, big opportunities to test ideas. But, in Japan, you

LIST OF PROJECTS

- **Rolling Bridge (2002)**
Paddington Basin, London
- **B of the Bang (2002)**
Sculpture for the Commonwealth Games
- **East Beach Cafe (2005)**
Littlehampton, West Sussex
- **Worth Abbey interior redesign (2009)**
Crawley, West Sussex
- **UK Pavilion (2010)**
Shanghai Expo, China
- **New Routemaster bus (2010)**
London
- **Olympic cauldron (2012)**
London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- **Bombay Sapphire Distillery (2014)**
Laverstoke Mill, Hampshire
- **Learning Hub (2015)**
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
- **Bund Finance Centre (2017)**
Shanghai, China
- **Zeitz MOCAA (2017)**
Cape Town, South Africa
- **Coal Drops Yard (2018)**
King's Cross, London
- **Vessel (2019)**
Structure in Hudson Yards, New York City

Many of Heatherwick Studio's most prominent projects have been closely linked to Britain's national identity.

cram in and make magic in a tiny space. That's very educational as well. It really makes you feel encouraged. This trip is reminding me to always work harder, because it's easy for projects to become too big and too stretched. If you can make magic in a space that size, it should be possible to make 10 times that in 10 times the space.

I feel a huge respect and interest and curiosity [for Japan]. One other thing that this project offers is a chance for that legendary craftsmanship to be something that my studio works with. And we've tried to think of that. You also design differently for available craftsmanship. In some parts of the world, the craftsmanship is just not there. So, you mustn't design the same kind of thing. You have to design the materials, the tools, the things that will come together to be able to look good, badly made. But this is amazing to be able to say here that we know the craftsmanship will be exceptional. So, it's trying to get the balance right so that there's a harmony

between the craftsmanship, the design ideas and the expectation of detail that we put in to the smallest scale as well as the biggest scale.

What experience do you want people to have in Toranomom-Azabudai?

The heart of the project is a focus on creating a garden—an intimate garden. We didn't want to have the normal relationship of building and garden around the edge, and it seemed that was the opportunity: to combine garden and building together. The step that really has driven this was exploring trellises. In gardens, you sometimes get these structures that are a lattice and the plants grow up and over those, and they have a square grid. It occurred to us that we could make a rational, practical grid that could work for shopping, for places for people to live and work. It could also then become this planted trellis that could undulate and make garden and

building blur together and simultaneously make public space blur together with buildings. What is a roof and what is public space could be more ambiguous.

So, we hope that there will be more room to explore and discover, because we haven't taken such a black-and-white approach to what is building and what is nature. We're going for a variety of experiences. The lovely thing about this site is the height difference. There are more than a few stories between the lowest part and the highest parts, which means that, rather than there being a hills project, we wanted to amplify the valley. I hope that this sense of indoors and outdoors will be special. And we hope that there'll be nowhere else like this. We believe that we're offering something that's precious in Tokyo—precious in many, many parts of the world—but extra special and magical because we're having the chance to make it here. 🌸



Heatherwick describes the design concept behind Mori's Toranomom-Azabudai project.

PHOTO: TIA HANCOCK/LIFE.14



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WELSH WELCOME

Five-day mission highlights nation's culinary strength

BY JULIAN RYALL



Five food and drink firms brought a taste of Wales to Japan in a trade delegation in mid-June. Some were looking to get their foot in the door with local partners, while others sought to raise the profile of high-end products already available to Japanese consumers.

Organised by the Welsh Government as part of its Food and Drink Wales trade development scheme, the five-day visit was the first of its kind, and was timed to coincide neatly with the upcoming Rugby World Cup (RWC) 2019.

Scouting the field

With Wales ranked number two in world rugby at the moment, the government and exporters are hoping to tap into interest in Welsh products among Japanese importers and consumers.

"We decided about one year ago that we needed to go to Japan, because the close links that exist between Wales and Japan screamed out to me that we needed to be here," said Mark Hughes, export senior manager for Food and Drink Wales, the industry board of the Welsh Government.

"With the Rugby World Cup coming, followed by the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, there is no better time to bring our products here," he added. "And the response that we have received from the Japanese firms that we have met with tells me that it was absolutely the right decision."

Ticket to play

The five participating firms delivered presentations to potential Japanese partners at the British Embassy on 19 June. The link to the RWC was highlighted at the outset thanks to a video that underlined Welsh confidence coming into the tournament, declaring, "This is our game".

"I have two parallel aims for coming on this trade delegation," admitted Steve Rees, founder and director of the Gower Brewery in South Wales. "I'm here to find a distributor for this market, because I think there is huge potential for us here, but also to scout out ahead of the World Cup".



Set up in November 2011, the firm has expanded steadily and its products are stocked by Tesco supermarkets across much of the UK. Gower Gold may be the best-selling brew, but the firm has a selection of 12 beers, including Shipwreck Ale.

Fortune falls

James Wright, managing director of the Aber Falls Distillery, was also looking to tap into the growing thirst for premium drinks in Japan and was confident that the firm's line-up of craft gins and liqueurs—soon to be complemented by Welsh whisky—will find a home in this market.

"We have only been open for 16 months, but I already have a very clear international strategy—especially when we launch our whisky—for what I want to achieve in the next 12 years and beyond".

Wright was in Japan to demonstrate the strengths and quality of the brand, as well as to cultivate contacts in a nation that is known for its love of whisky. The visit had already paid off, he said, as a meeting with Japanese drinks giant Suntory had gone very well, and further talks were scheduled to determine how best the two firms could collaborate in the future.

Japanese firms are interested in the Aber Falls backstory. It was the first whisky distillery to open in North Wales in a century, uses water taken from the waterfalls that are in the firm's name and will be releasing its first aged whisky in 2021.

Preserving market

In contrast to the newcomers, Carol Jones is a veteran of three visits, and products from Welsh Lady Preserves, the firm where she is sales and marketing manager, have been available in high-end supermarkets and department stores for some years. This visit enabled her to meet with existing partners and seek out potential new routes to market for an award-winning range of preserves, sauces and condiments.

"Welsh Lady products were first brought here in 1979, and were in the Takashimaya department store," Jones explained. "Whenever we do events back home, such as the Royal Welsh Show, it's always good to be able to say that these items are on the shelves of shops in Japan."

She was particularly interested in using the visit to explore collaborations, such as providing the individual glass jars of jams and sauces.

Welsh Lady curds and marmalades have been extremely popular—particularly the whisky marmalade, which, she said, had been devised with one eye on the Japanese market. Other items have required some explanation. Mint sauce has yet to catch on in Japan, she admitted, although everyone who had tried the horseradish sauce had been pleasantly surprised.

Lovely lamb

Mint sauce goes hand in hand with one of Wales' best exports—lamb—and Deanna Leven of Meat Promotion Wales emphasised the quality and safety of both lamb and beef raised on the nation's hills.

"The quality of our lamb and beef is a result of the good farming practices that are in place," she said. "We also want to demonstrate, while we are here, that lamb is a very versatile product that has a mild flavour and is really suited to any cuisine around the world, including Japan."

"The trick is getting people to taste the product. We are using this trip to do that, and I can safely say that the reactions we have been getting are very positive". 🇬🇧

GLEN MATLOCK OF THE SEX PISTOLS

Still a show off

BY GUY PERRYMAN MBE

When you meet a member of the Sex Pistols, you anticipate meeting a skinny, pale, spotty, spiky-haired person in ripped clothes. But when I met Pistols' bass player Glen Matlock at Fuji Rock Festival 2019, I was greeted by a tanned, floppy-fringed, handsome and healthy looking gent with not a ripped garment in sight.

"You're suntanned!" I say out loud. "I've been here, there and everywhere this summer," Matlock replied. "I was in the States, which was hot. I was in France, which had a heat wave. I went to this beautiful island called Porquerolles, just off Toulon. It's been quite nice in England—we had a heat wave, too. I was glad to be coming to Japan to cool down a bit."

He missed our heat wave by about 24 hours.

Fuji fans

I've interviewed Matlock before—in 2014, in the air-conditioned comfort of a radio studio in Tokyo—but this time we're outside enjoying the mountain air at sunset, and he was keen to talk about Fuji Rock and his current band, Glen Matlock and The Tough Cookies.

"It was great. We played last night—a bit wet—and they stayed all the way through. It was a good night. I even heard that one of The Chemical Brothers was there and really dug it."

The Chemical Brothers headlined the festival the previous evening and stayed around to enjoy themselves. Matlock was also noticeably having a good time. "That's what I'm trying to do with my band at the moment. You know I'm older, I'm not going to be top of the charts, I just want to do what I want to do."

The current Tough Cookies line-up includes legendary guitarist Earl Slick, who famously

played with David Bowie for a number of years, and also collaborated with John Lennon and many other big names in music.

"I met Earl about 10 years ago, got involved in a project by a mate of mine who's a fashion designer and thinks he's a singer, and we got on great," Matlock recalls. "You know, in the music business, there's loads of projects that don't normally come to fruition, and that was one of them. But it was fun, and I met Earl through it. And then, when I was thinking about doing this album, *Good to Go*, which came out at the tail end of last year—which you're going to be playing several tracks from on your radio show—everything fell into place."

Famous faces

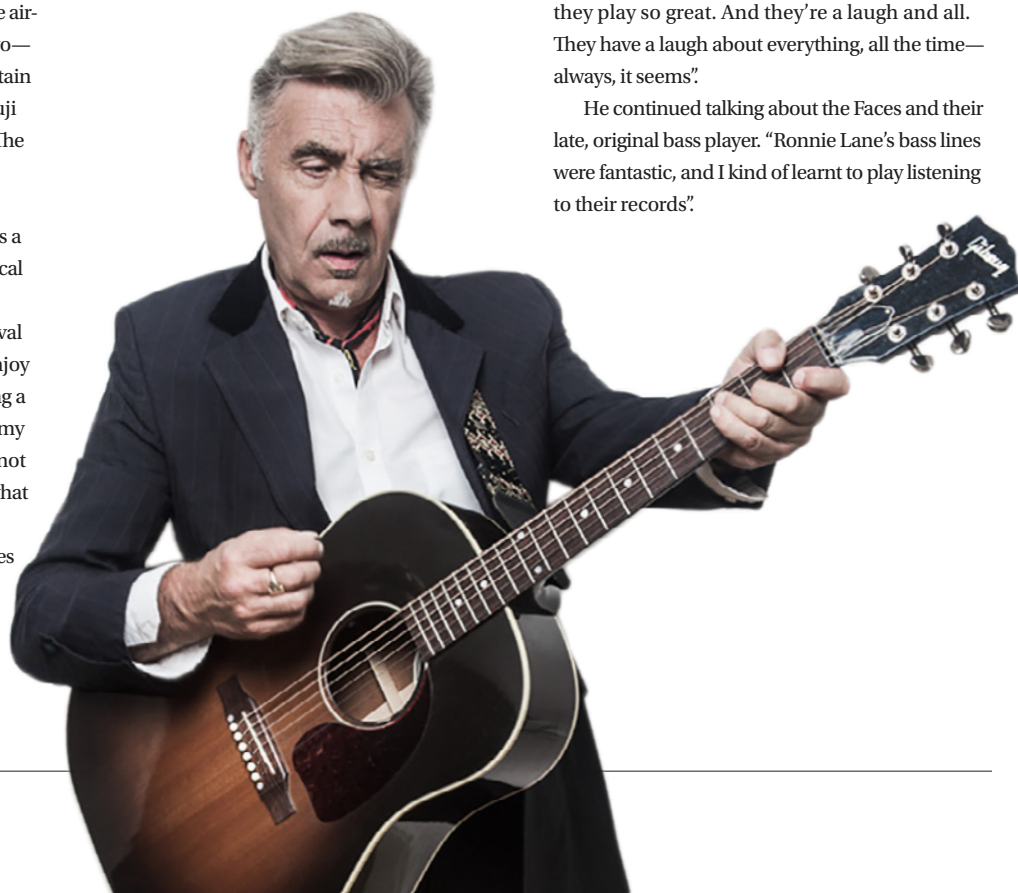
Matlock has performed with a number of famous names himself. I asked if there was a favourite?



"Well, I think the Faces." He recalled the previous time he played at Fuji Rock Festival, in 2011, with legendary British band the Faces. The line-up included original member and Rolling Stones' guitarist Ronnie Wood.

"Yeah, I was playing with my all-time favourite band. It was the band I stood in front of the mirror when I was 14 and couldn't play, pretending I was in them. It was great. It was a blast really. And that band—to me it was the band that opened up the door to all kinds of music: The Temptations and the blues, and Bobby Womack, The Staple Singers—there's a lot going on in that band, and they play so great. And they're a laugh and all. They have a laugh about everything, all the time—always, it seems."

He continued talking about the Faces and their late, original bass player. "Ronnie Lane's bass lines were fantastic, and I kind of learnt to play listening to their records."



Backwards and forwards

When Matlock was approached to join the 2011 line-up, he was asked, “Are you going to be alright with this?” He replied: “Yeah I know this stuff backwards. It’s just forwards I struggle with!” He told me, “I think that got me the gig”.

Matlock remembered a special moment with the Sex Pistols. “I think one of the best sense-of-occasion gigs was the first time I ever went to New York. We were playing with Iggy Pop at this place called the Palladium. It was Halloween—back then we never really celebrated Halloween—and the whole audience was dressed in Halloween outfits, The Cramps supported us, and backstage was Debbie Harry dressed as a witch who gave me a kiss on the cheek. It was fantastic”.



Early years

I wanted to know more about Matlock’s early years at Saint Martin’s School of Art in London in the mid 1970s. “Well, I could draw a bit—haven’t done any for years now—but I was interested in art school because I’d read that nearly every band I liked from the ’60s had formed at art school. So I wanted to get into a band somehow, and also art school was kind of important—not so much for what you learn there, but, back then, you didn’t want to work, you wanted to do something with your life but you didn’t quite know what it was. [Art school] is breathing space, and it allows you to get your ideas together.

As it happened, I met up with the Sex Pistols outside of art college and took them to art college—

And Bryan Ferry would be swanking down the street and Malcolm [McLaren] thought they were all kind of—here’s a good English word—tossers, and we did, too.

not to do drawing, but there was a scene. So, the first gigs we did, that I booked, were another college: Central School of Art. We also played at Chelsea School of Art. They were the only places that would have us, but were full of the people who were a bit outlandish. And that was part of the birth of the punk thing. They were the first people to have kind of shorter hair in the ’70s, and Saint Martin’s was famous for fashion, so everybody looked outlandish even back then”.

Cultural impact

When we look back, the Sex Pistols were such a short moment in cultural history, but exerted an influence that still resonates 40 years later. I wondered whether, at the time, in the eye of the cultural storm, it felt as big as it does now?

“Yeah, I think even right from the get-go we knew we were on to something, because we were in the right place at the right time. And we had the right people around us, like Malcolm McLaren. We all met through his teddy boy shop, which was originally called SEX. It was right in the wrong end of Kings Road next to Granny Takes a Trip where people like the Rolling Stones got their clothes from. And Bryan Ferry would be swanking down the street and Malcolm thought they were all kind of—here’s a good English word—tossers, and we did, too. We had no money, nothing. But it gave us an attitude, so we thought we were right and they were wrong, even though they were all multi-millionaires. We were wrong and they’re still multimillionaires and we ain’t. But you know, we did something”.

And Matlock is still doing that “something” today—maybe in a more genteel way—in his everyday life, until he gets on stage.

“I think you’re the person on stage that you can’t really get round to doing in the daytime. It’s your chance to show off. My girlfriend says, ‘All you do is show off!’ Yeah? What’s wrong with that? And get paid for it!” 🇬🇧



The Sex Pistols (from left) Paul Cook, Glen Matlock, John Lydon and Steve Jones in Amsterdam in 1977

ARTS

UK CULTURE IN JAPAN

COMPILED BY:

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1 UNTIL 13 JANUARY

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2 3 SEPTEMBER

Swervedriver

The English alternative rock band from Oxford made waves in the shoegaze scene throughout the 1990s—evolving over time into the indie rock sound they're known for today. After a hiatus, the band is back with their fifth studio album, *Future Ruins*.

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3 6-23 SEPTEMBER

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4
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5
7-15 OCTOBER

Sting Japan Tour

Seventeen-time Grammy Award winner Sting will be rolling through Japan for the 11th time as he brings his new tour—*Sting: My Songs*—to four cities. The Northumberland native will be performing favourites spanning his 40-plus-year career.

PHOTO: MAYUMI NISHIDA

Fukuoka, Chiba, Sendai and Osaka

Price: ¥17,000-18,000

<https://udo.jp/concert/Sting>



6
12 OCTOBER

TSO Subscription Concert Series No.674

The Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, led by English conductor Jonathan Nott, will be performing symphonies by Ives, Schubert and Brahms. Varvara Nepomnyaschaya, winner of the Concours Géza Anda international piano competition, will make her Tokyo debut.

Suntory Hall

1-13-1 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052

03-3505-1001

6pm

Price: ¥3,000-9,000

<http://tokyosymphony.jp>



UK-JAPAN EVENTS

1
The British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) hosted the Travel Tourism Think Tank: Responsible Tourism on 29 July at Tokyo American Club (page 22). The panel consisted of (from left): moderator Adam Fulford, chief executive of Fulford Enterprises; Paul Christie, chief executive of Walk Japan; Hans Heijligers, chief executive of IHG ANA Hotels Group Japan; Ruth Marie Jarman, chief executive of Jarman International KK; Tomoko Hisaki of Visit Britain; Naohiro Fukawa, director at Tourism Shizuoka Japan; and Muneyuki Okabe, chief executive of MENEX Company Limited.

2
The BCCJ teamed up with sake experts Imadeya for a special sake tasting session on 11 July at Restaurant Kurabuu in Tsukiji, Tokyo. The event, entitled Sake Salon by Imadeya, was designed for female members and guests of the BCCJ. Pictured are (from left): Ikuko Saito of KPMG; Nora Yamada, director of external relations at The British School in Tokyo; Lori Henderson MBE, executive director of the BCCJ; June Hyosoon of Imadeya; and Catherine O'Connell of Catherine O'Connell Law.

3
Together with the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ), the BCCJ presented Marriage Equality: Impact on Workforce Productivity on 31 July in the ACCJ boardroom. Speakers included: Evan Wolfson (third left), the father of marriage equality who provided the legal and policy perspective; Eriko Talley (centre left), senior vice president of Human Resources for Coca-Cola (Japan) Company, Ltd.; and Alexander Dmitrenko (centre right), head of Asia Sanctions at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer and co-chair of the Lawyers for LGBT & Allies Network.



4



5



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7

4 Non-profit organisation YouMeWe hosted the Designing Artists Academy (DAA) from 11 to 20 August at Miraikan Taimei in Ikebukuro. The annual summer arts camp offers kids living in children’s homes a unique opportunity to experience different forms of art taught by professional artists from all over the world.

5 To support this year’s DAA, YouMeWe held a fundraiser on 23 July at Blu Jam Café in Daikanyama. Artist Ken Tanaka painted this colourful mural while guests enjoyed tacos.

6 Members of the Custom Media team paid a visit to the Webb Ellis Cup, the trophy awarded to the winner of the Rugby World Cup, on display at Tokyo American Club on 24 July. Pictured are *ACUMEN* Publisher Simon Farrell (second left) with creative consultants (from left) Toshiya Haraguchi, Garreth Stevens and James Greer.

7 The 30% Club Japan, founded in May, with the aim of increasing female representation on executive boards in Japan, appointed its first chair and vice-chairs on 17 July. Masahiko Uotani, president and chief executive of Shiseido Company, Limited, was named chair, while Yoriko Goto, chair of Deloitte Tohmatsu Group and Douglas Hymas, country executive of The Bank of New York Mellon were selected as vice-chairs.

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



Horatio, Hamlet and the ghost (Henry Fuseli, 1789)

Summer is the high season for scary stories in Japan. Rather than gathering around the fire at Yuletide to swap ghostly tales, we prefer to have our spines chilled and blood curdled in the midst of heatwaves. It helps us cool down, and has been our way of combating heatstroke in Japan for centuries. Air conditioning by storytelling has been with us since pretty much the birth of the nation.

One hundred stories

One typical format for the story-sharing event is the *hyaku-monogatari* or “one hundred stories”. People gather in an otherwise dark room in which a hundred candles have been lit. One by one, the participants begin to share their special tale. When they reach the end of their story, they blow out a candle. And so it goes on.

When the hundredth tale has been told and the hundredth candle extinguished, something happens in the total darkness. You might not want to know exactly what. The knowledge may lead to many a sleepless night. In the early 20th century, it became fashionable to hold these hundred-story events in famous old houses converted into entertainment halls. Corridors and gardens were adorned with eerie props, such as dead bodies dangling from somewhere.

Business blots

I have not checked on whether this sort of thing still goes on today. I doubt it. But I know for sure that the Japanese passion for summertime fright is very much alive and kicking. Which makes me think: How about a storytelling event featuring scary economic tales this summer? Might not some business magazine make a special edition

State intervention turns all economic stories into scary ones.

from such an idea? If collecting a hundred yarns is a bit too much work for the editors, a handful of the goriest will do.

The editors can pick the themes and then commission the best and brightest among economists to write the tales—stories that feel like a cold finger running down your spine. Tales of horror with blood flying everywhere. Ghosts. Goblins. Phantoms. Apparitions. What have you. All kinds of setups and situations are possible. The real world is full of policymakers and business leaders who must surely be some kind of monster in disguise anyway.

If I were the editor, the first tale I would pick would be “The ghost of nationalisation comes to the Japanese stock market”. Although, this one is not really a ghost story. It is already reality. As a result of massive buying of exchange-traded funds, the Bank of Japan is now a top-10 shareholder for nearly half of the country’s listed firms. Who will save Japanese equities from the sinister hand of state control?

Further frights

For instalment two, we should go international. There is certainly no shortage of global horror stories, but foremost among them is surely “The US-China war from hell!”. This war zone seems to keep expanding even as we speak. The clash of giant monsters, which started out as tariff warfare and went on to become techno-wars, now looks as though it will morph into competitive currency devaluation. The thing to watch out for is whether

the US actually decides to intervene in the foreign exchange market to sell dollars. Once that happens, it will shed whatever semblance remained of its status as a key currency nation. When that mask slips away, one does not like to think what kind of monstrosity we will be left with.

For instalment three, I would pick the other trade warfare from hell—the one in our own backyard. Japan decided in July to impose tighter controls on its security-sensitive exports to South Korea. Seoul saw this as retaliation against its court order demanding compensation for people forced to work under Japan’s erstwhile colonial rule on the Korean Peninsula. South Korea then tightened its own controls on exports to Japan. Escalation begets escalation. Without the intervention of some *deus ex machina*, this confrontation looks as though it will take both sides down into a bottomless pit of horrors. What lurks there is anybody’s guess.

Brexit

Episode four shall deal with “The tragi-comedy of Brexit”. Boris Johnson, who features elsewhere in this issue of *ACUMEN* (pages 14–15), is quite the accomplished comic hero in appearance. He seems all set for a no-deal Brexit come October. That would be a tragedy. Is he prepared to take on the lead role in that event?

There is a shadowy presence lurking behind all these economic horror stories. That presence is the State with a capital S—Big Brother if you will. State intervention turns all economic stories into scary ones. Consisting of only four stories thus far, my editorial venture has a long way to cover before it can reach the *hyaku-monogatari* stage. Yet, already, the global horizon seems to be darkening. Something evil this way comes. Maybe. 🇬🇧



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- Specialist Recruitment Company
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