



The
Japan Society
of
Scotland

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2019



[HTTP://JAPANSOCIETYOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK/](http://japansocietyofscotland.org.uk/)

As we reach the end of another year The Japan Society of Scotland wishes all its members and friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We hope that you enjoy reading about the work of the Society and hope that you can join with us during 2020 for some of our events and activities.

CONTENTS

Exploring NOH Theatre in Scotland Pages 3 – 4

Thomas Blake Glover Student Scholarship Pages 5 – 9

UK/JAPAN Season of Culture 2019/20 Page 10

JTH Charitable Trust – Support to Schools Pages 11 – 12

Children's Day on Orkney Pages 13

Kamaishi – Rugby World Cup after the Tsunami Pages 14 – 15

**Don't forget that our AGM will be on
Saturday 1st February in Edinburgh**

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EXPLORING NOH THEATRE IN SCOTLAND

This November, Japanese Studies at the University of Edinburgh hosted a series of Noh drama events to coincide with Noh master Munenori Takeda's visit to the UK for performance and workshop tour, “Passion and Stillness.”

On 11 November, with the support of the Japan Society of Scotland, Munenori Takeda and Fumiyuki Takeda took part in a roundtable discussion on “International Perspectives on Noh.” After last year's visit to us in Asian Studies - his first to a UK university - Munenori Takeda had expressed a keen interest in further interaction with researchers. So, this time we decided to bring in the roundtable discussion to build on the link initiated in 2018 and foster intellectual exchange between master practitioners of Noh and academics and students working on Asian Studies and Theatre. The Noh masters were in conversation with Ashley Thorpe, Senior Lecturer in Theatre at Royal Holloway and Director of Noh Training Project UK, and Gemma McGregor, an Orkney-based composer who plays flute and shakuhachi, whose works are influenced by traditional Japanese music.



Participants, right to left: Ashley Thorpe, Gemma McGregor, Fumiyuki Takeda, Grey Micah (interpreter), Munenori Takeda, Helen Parker (chair). Photo credit: Fumiko Narumi-Munro.

Some of the key topics explored were: difficulties and benefits of writing and performing Noh using non-Japanese source material; developing traditional Noh training for performers outside Japan; the resilience, versatility and universal appeal of Noh as a form of expression, and the relationship between the actors and their audiences in Noh.

The Noh masters emphasised how promoting Noh internationally and collaborating with performers from other countries can both help preserve the 600-year old performing art and lead to exciting innovations. Gemma McGregor spoke about her recent residency at The Red House, Aldeburgh, studying the influence of Noh on Benjamin Britten's music and starting work on her new chamber opera, inspired by Noh. Ashley Thorpe introduced his English language Noh, *Emily*, first performed in traditional Noh style by students at Royal Holloway two years ago, which presents the dramatic death of suffragette Emily Wilding Davison from the perspective of the jockey who was riding the king's horse.



Watching an excerpt from a work in progress version of Ashley Thorpe's *Emily*.
Photo credit: Fumiko Narumi Munro.

THOMAS BLAKE GLOVER ASI SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship was created in recognition of the work of Thomas Blake Glover, the Aberdeenshire-born entrepreneur credited with opening Japan up to the West. The scholarship aims to recognise Glover's success in Japan and provide young Scots with the opportunity to learn about business and culture in the hope of further improving Scotland's historic links with Japan. The fund is named after Aberdeen Standard Investments (ASI) the major sponsor of the Scholarship and Thomas Blake Glover (1836-1911), the Scottish born entrepreneur. His career in Asia began with Jardine, Matheson & Co in Hong Kong from where he went to Japan. He created Glover and Co. in Nagasaki in 1859, and was most successful in helping the modernisation process ushered in by the Meiji Period (1868-1912). He also left some tangible results in the form of a brewery that later became the Kirin Beer brand and he is associated with the Mitsubishi group of corporations. For decades, Kirin was the best-selling beer in Japan and still remains a leading force in the market. Glover House in Nagasaki draws thousands of visitors every year, which makes Glover a powerful symbol of the Scottish presence in Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century. Other Scots made various important contributions in the fields of civil engineering, education and public administration, but Glover remains the symbol of commercial involvement and enterprise.



The Japan Society of Scotland with financial support from Aberdeen Standard Investments, advertise and recruit one student from Scotland each year to study at the Japanese Language Summer School at the International Christian University in Tokyo and then to carry out some visits or job-shadowing in connection with their chosen career path. Demand for places is always very high. Reports from last year's scholarship recipient is given below and shows how much they gained from the experience.

A summer in Japan - 2019

Moments: Finishing a 70-minute conversation with a Japanese student I'd just met in my second week. Being the only person to receive full marks in the mid-term speaking test. Walking into the huge office block of JICA - Japan's high-profile international development agency - and asking for my contact in the Global Environment Department using the formal, humble Japanese I learned in class. Life can often be measured in milestones: inflection points at which we realise a step-change in ourselves, our capabilities, our circumstances. I experienced several of these.

The richness and diversity of my experience is impossible to capture in its entirety. Tokyo – beaches and mountains included - is a wonderful city – Mitaka, a beautiful suburb. I long to return. I made friends from Japan and around the world at the International Christian University (ICU). My first challenge was a placement test, based on which I was – surprisingly – assigned to the C3 class. This is the third “beginner” class, but I knew that studying with people who had studied Japanese for 2 years at university would put me in my familiar, but enjoyable, position of being the underdog. My classmates included Americans with Japanese heritage and Chinese students with a seemingly vast knowledge of kanji! Undeterred, I set about making friends and throwing myself into the learning experience, knowing that this was the route to genuine improvement with the language.

Days at ICU went by swiftly, although with some degree of routine: 4 hours of class, a mountain of homework, and a small test each morning. There were mid-term and final exams to contend with, as well as a project which involved interviewing strangers in the street using formal Japanese. The differences from education in the UK were evident. The teachers at ICU steadily pushed us as far as we could go, always with a smile of course. They only lapsed into English if necessary. The Japanese method of learning by repetition and form, rather than dissecting, rationalising, and debating everything, was palpable. This led to some surprising gains, particularly in the early weeks, where I found myself producing some Japanese phrases without even thinking and recalling words that I didn't realise I'd learnt in the first place.

I made a point of trying to experience as much as I could away from the classroom. Living in the ICU dorm provided a highly sociable basis to my day, while I also tried to get off campus whenever possible to immerse myself in Tokyo and practice my new-found conversation skills with my other friends. I was surprised by the openness and chattiness of many young Japanese people, although at a certain point in the relationship my lack of cultural nuance often came into play, emphasising how much I still had to learn. Back at ICU, there was a culture programme - Japanese cultural activities or demonstrations. I did a 5-hour visit to a nearby Zen temple and took part in a traditional tea ceremony on campus.

At Kannon-in Temple, we had a tour and were told about its history, before receiving an extensive demonstration of how to eat a Buddhist meal. This was incredibly intricate, involving a mindful series of prescribed forms, actions, and interactions. We meditated in the temple before receiving our vegan meal, after which we could ask the head monk some questions. We rang the temple bells and beat the drums senseless, then – instigated by the monks to celebrate summer – we all played around with sparklers outside the (wooden) temple! The day was rounded off by a group visit to an *izakaya* – Japanese bar - for the “all you can drink” and “all you can eat” options favoured by salarymen. Piles of *karage* (Japanese-style fried chicken) and a succession of drinks appeared. I saw first-hand many of the stark contradictions in Japanese culture.

After my time at ICU came the chance to make professional connections in Tokyo. Last year, I completed my MSc in International Development and I was keen to explore this sector, particularly water access, which is a core interest of mine and an area in which Japan is a global leader. I met with the Japan Waterworks Association (JWWA) where Shibuya Masao-san and Hatsushiba Misuzu-san of the international team were kind enough to explain water service delivery in Japan in great detail, as well as how their organisation works. JWWA is a membership body consisting of local utilities. JWWA brings them together, facilitating and coordinating the sharing of knowledge as well as influencing central government. JWWA’s international team works with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to place experts abroad to exchange knowledge and gain diverse experience.

I was lucky enough to also meet with JICA twice. The first involved travelling by shinkansen to Himeji, the city famous for its beautiful original castle. There I met Kawamorita-san, who was seconded to the Himeji branch and was able to give me insight into both the overall workings of JICA and the regional responsibilities he shouldered in flood management and disaster risk reduction. I learned that they tended to work in various roles, depending on the needs of regions or projects. This was something I'd heard, that rather than specialise in a narrow area, Japanese workers (particularly graduates) are often reassigned to support the organisation's needs. JICA experts also rotate geographically, with a few years at a time spent in Japan or overseas. I learned a lot, but would like to highlight one of the immediate challenges brought about by climate change: Kawamorita-san told me that large storm surges in the Hyogo region, traditionally expected once every 100 years, are now expected once every 19 years. This frequency is continually increasing.

Through Kawamorita-san I was later able to visit Koiwa Kenichiro-san at JICA HQ in Tokyo. Koiwa-san was part of the Global Environment Department and was able to share with me his experience in waste management – particularly in the Philippines - and summarise JICA's activities in all aspects of environmental management. His colleague Aramaki Risa-san shared her expertise in water resources.

My connections and experiences on the Scholarship transformed my ability to speak Japanese and deepened my desire to work in Japan for a longer period. The people I met were nothing but welcoming, and I know that if I further improve my Japanese, I can make living in the country become a reality. Crucially, I now know that if I want to have a career in Japan, I will need to reach N2 or N1 level in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. This is now my aim.

Without the sponsorship of Aberdeen Standard Investments and the support of the Japan Society of Scotland, such an extended, immersive experience would be beyond me. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all involved and I hope that I can continue to forge links between Scotland and Japan, both professionally and personally.

Daniel Robertson

Some of Daniel's experiences in Japan – more on show at our AGM





Details of planned events are on the Japanese Embassy website.

<https://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/SeasonCulture/index.html>

The Japan Society of Scotland has been playing our part and organising workshops in schools throughout Scotland who have decided to study Japan as part of their curriculum because of the increased interest brought about by the Rugby World Cup and the Olympics.

We have visited 8 schools during the year in Dundee, Fife, Greenock (2 schools), Paisley, Peebles, Port Glasgow and Stonehaven. After an initial slideshow showing something of different aspects of Japan, we have run bases on dressing-up, use of chopsticks, toys, and food & drink.



SUPPORT FOR SCOTTISH SCHOOLS

The JTH Charitable Trust was set up by previous president and longtime supporter of the Japan Society of Scotland, James Thom Howat, who had a long association with and a love of Japan and its people during his lifetime. The Trust supports many organisations including the Japan Society of Scotland. Supported by £2K income from the JTH Charitable Trust annually, The Japan Society of Scotland helps schools with the purchase of resources that will bring Japan into the curriculum or support educational visits with a Japanese theme - basically, anything that will help promote a better understanding of Japan and its culture and customs to Scottish young people. This year's funded projects are detailed below.

Orkney Japan Association – Children's Day Weekend - £500

Described in a separate article elsewhere in the newsletter

St John's Primary School, Port Glasgow - £150

They were studying the book Kensuke's Kingdom and will study Japan through this novel. The children have expressed an interest in learning about the food, art, music and traditions of the country. Much of this they can resource online, but they hoped to could visit a restaurant to learn how to prepare Japanese food. The restaurant Wagamama have offered to run a visit for free, but we would need the cost of transport there.

Orkney Schools – Taiko Drum Project - £600

The schools wish to buy 10 drum sets (£300 per set: drum, bachi, stand, cover and shipping) and to fund an initial round of local workshops. They would expect music students in both secondary schools would have access to drumming workshops etc in the first instance, and that this would be approximately 100-150 students per year. We would expect this number to increase over time, as Orkney music teachers and musicians became proficient in TAIKO drumming and able to take on teaching roles themselves. We would also hope to develop an ongoing and evolving relationship with TSUCHIGUMO DAIKO, with possible participation in Orkney music festivals, or a summer TAIKO programme open to a broader music community in Orkney over time.

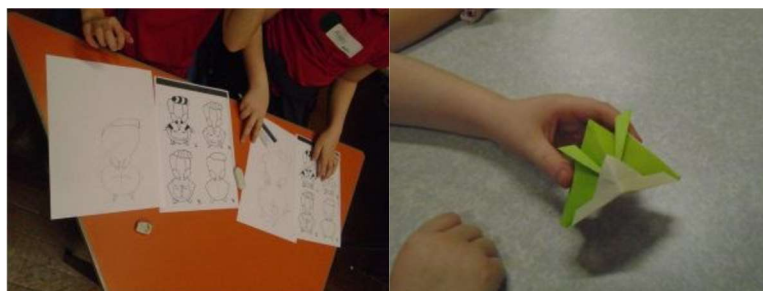
Kilmaron Special Needs School, Cupar, Fife - £500

A taiko drumming workshop was held on 26th September at Kilmaron special educational needs school in Cupar. Children with special educational needs were also bussed in from a nearby main-stream school. The taiko teacher from Tsuchigumo Daiko was incredibly sensitive in making sure the noise was just at the right level to meet the needs of the various students. It was an intense and very moving experience and we left with hearts full of admiration for the teachers and nurses who care for these students every day.



JETAA Scotland, Fuji Festival - £500

On 7th November, P5 students from St Ninian's Roman Catholic School and Dedridge Primary School in West Lothian joined together in small groups to experience a variety of Japanese activities. Learners rotated around karate, manga, drama, origami, calligraphy and toys. After a morning of activity, the children tried sushi.



Children's Day Activities - The Orkney Japan Association

2019 saw the third year of events over the May holiday weekend and it is fast becoming a permanent fixture in their annual events calendar with around 450 people participating in various events held over the weekend.

The Tsuchigumo Daiko drumming group ran workshops at Kirkwall Grammar School, an open-air performance in Stromness, a Tanko Bushi at the main event and a concert on the Saturday evening with local fiddlers.

Ikebana was another attraction this year with demonstrations and workshops in local schools. Around 127 people attended these and were inspired by the wonderful creations of Mrs Deborah Hathorn and Mrs Shoko Koizumi Hanson of the Sogetsu School of Ikebana.

The main event on the Saturday involved Drumming and Ikebana workshops as well as origami, calligraphy, drawing, dressing-up, Japanese Games and of course a wide variety of food and drink to be enjoyed. Around 200 people attended on the day and enjoyed the activities.



Kamaishi, Iwate and the Rugby World Cup



Almost wiped off the map by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, the small rugby-mad Japanese town of Kamaishi hosted its first Rugby World Cup match on 25th September in a powerful symbol of recovery. Famous for mining, fishing and rugby, the coastal town in north-eastern Japan lost more than 1,000 people in the tsunami that washed away the majority of its infrastructure. Having already suffered major Tsunamis in 1896 and 1960, they had just built the world's largest breakwater, completed in 2010, but it didn't save the town because of the 9.1 Richter scale size of earthquake. Now the town of just 34,000 hosted the Pool D match between Fiji and Uruguay in the Kamaishi Recovery Memorial stadium, a 16,000-seater on the ruins of a former school destroyed in the tsunami and the World Cup's only purpose-built venue. The school was the scene for what became known as the "miracle of Kamaishi", as more than 400 children aged from six to 15 managed to escape the onrushing waves, sprinting some two kilometres (more than a mile) up into the mountains.

"Today marks a very special day for World Rugby and for the people of Kamaishi," said World Rugby chief Bill Beaumont. "When deciding upon host cities for Japan 2019, it was clear that Kamaishi was a place with rugby at its heart, with a great rugby history and a passionate local fan base," added Beaumont, who said it would be a "unique, special and fantastic" venue. In what promises to be a moving occasion, a moment's silence before the game will honour the victims.

Rugby is an integral part of Kamaishi's DNA. The town's club, Nippon Steel Kamaishi RFC, swept all before them in the early 1980s, winning seven consecutive national titles and earning the nickname "the Northern Iron Men". As fans from across the world screamed and cheered with delight during Rugby World Cup 2019, this town, so famous for its rugby history will take another major step in its ongoing recovery. Whilst some residents are still in temporary accommodation over 8 years after the Tsunami struck, it's clear that hosting the World Cup has brought a lot of investment to the town without which it could have just declined.

There used to be a telephone box in the middle of the Kamaishi stadium. Nodoka Kikuchi reckons it was somewhere right around the halfway line. She'd know. She was the last person to ever use it. That was at a 2.45pm on 11 March 2011. She was 15, had just got out of high school, and was calling her parents to come and pick her up. A minute later the great earthquake struck. "It started to shake from side-to-side," she says. "It was terrible, I was holding on to the box, and my friend outside was hugging a gate, because it was the only way we could stand up." Behind them, the earth of the school football pitch split open and water started to spray out of the ground "like a fountain".



The survival rate of children in Kamaishi (only 5 died and they were not at school that day) compared to similar towns elsewhere on the coast where 70% of youngsters perished is as a direct result of an innovative education programme that was instigated by Toshitaka Katada, Professor of Civil Engineering at Gunma University and challenged children to act quickly.

Just run! Run Uphill! Don't worry about the others. Save yourself first. And tell future generations that a Tsunami once reached this point. And that those who survived were those who ran. Uphill. So, Run! Run Uphill!

The compelling words on Kamaishi's Tsunami Memorial Stone

The Japan Society of Scotland is a Charity, registered in Scotland – Charity Number SC037309



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www.harajukukitchen.co.uk/menu

Harajuku Kitchen fuses traditional family recipes that have been passed down for 3 generations, with innovative, AA Rosette level flair, to bring the finest Japanese cuisines to Edinburgh. We aim to provide wholesome Japanese food crafted with passion for utmost authentic and originality. We deliver the true flavours of Japan with a touch of style from Tokyo right in the heart of Edinburgh.

10% discount on food bill on production of current
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