

万葉

myriad leaves

- ② letter from the editor
goodbye and farewell
- ③ work placement
- ④ jet program
- ⑤ international links
- ⑥ seminars and symposia
how do you vote
- ⑦ staff interview
- ⑧ race 4 city hall
japan exchange
jlgc staff



Summer 2004 • Issue 45

春過ぎて夏来るらし
 白たへの衣干したり
 天の香具山

Haru sugite

Natsu kitaru rashi

Shiro ta e no koromoho shitari

Ame no Kaguyama.

Empress Jitōs

Spring has passed.

Summer seems to be here now.

Rows of white garments air

In the sun upon the slopes

Of graceful Mt. Kagu.

① Yotaka Andon, Tonami, Toyama.
www11.ocn.ne.jp/~tulipfls/yotaka_e.htm



② Matsuo Taisha Matsuri, near Kyoto
 Photo by Masatoshi Kasono



③ Mount Sakurajima, Kagoshima

④ Yosakoi Carnival, Kochi City



⑤ Firework Festival, Sumida River, Tokyo.
<http://growhair.web.infoseek.co.jp/Hanabi0108/Hanabi0108.html>



The Council of Local Authorities for International Relations
 Founded in 1988, CLAIR is a joint organisation representing Japan's
 47 prefectures, 12 designated cities and 3,232 municipalities.

Myriad Leaves is the English-language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry. It contains
 4,516 waka poems, the last of which is dated AD759. There is uncertainty over the intention of the title:
 it could mean either 'Collection of ten thousand leaves' or 'Collection for ten thousand generations'.



letter from the editor

As this issue's manyo says, 'summer seems to be here now'. Summer is festival time in Japan, with lots of fireworks, dancing, parades, and general merrymaking for all the family, all over the country; hence the pictures on the cover of this issue. If you can stand the heat and humidity of a Japanese summer, this is definitely the time to visit to experience some culture on a community level.

It feels like only yesterday we welcomed our new colleagues from Japan; they have already been here for over two months, and have all finished their work placements. You can read about them on page 3.

Our Japanese colleagues very much enjoyed experiencing the recent elections here; on page 6 Toru Ageta tells us of the differences he noticed between elections in the UK and in Japan.

We have also been out and about recently to various seminars and symposia; Toru Ageta organised the Japanese local representatives' Information Exchange Conference held this year in Newcastle, Irmelind Kirchner went to the Founding Conference of UCLD in Paris, and I went with other JLGC staff members to the Welcome Japan Symposium, to name but a few. Again, you can find reports on some of these in this issue of Myriad Leaves.

Continuing our series on the UK's local links with Japan, Mr. Christopher Watson has kindly contributed an article on links between the West Midlands and Shizuoka, which coincidentally is the host prefecture for this year's Japan Exchange and Study Tour. For more details, please see pages 5

Finally, this issue sees the departure of Mr. Ando, who is returning to Japan after over four years in the post of JLGC Director; see opposite for his parting words. We are now welcoming his successor, Mr. Shigeru Naiki, who will be accosted for an interview for the autumn Myriad Leaves.

I'm sure Mr. Ando is looking forward to getting back to some rather more predictable weather. Although "summer seems to be here", we haven't yet had too much sunshine, particularly on the weekends. Let's hope we will be able to enjoy at least another couple of opportunities to give our barbecues an airing before autumn!

Angela Harkness Robertson, Editor

GOODBYE



Akira Ando

For over four years, I really enjoyed my life in London, both the official and the private aspects of it. I was impressed by how speedily and dynamically wide-ranging reforms of the British local government system were driven forward: changes to the political arrangements of councils as well as changes in management practices, such as the development from Best Value to CPA as well as changes to the local financial system. This really reflects the ability of the party in power to implement their agenda forcefully. I emphasised the research role of the JLGC by publishing books (in Japanese) on the local government systems of those nine countries in Europe that JLGC London is covering. We published two larger-scale documents on the U.K. and one each on Germany, Ireland and Sweden. Austria will follow soon. We are also proceeding with research in order to publish on the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway within the next two years.

Life in the British countryside, where there are quiet brick houses surrounded by deep green and people engage themselves in gardening, is ideal for me. I also think the bright life in Italy and Southern France surrounded by various colorful flowers is splendid. I will not forget these experiences and will make good use of them in Japan in the future.

WELCOME

Shigeru Naiki

On 15th July, JLGC welcomed its new *Shocho*, Mr. Shigeru Naiki. Mr. Naiki, who joined the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1974, has had plenty of experience of living in the UK; he was seconded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a time, and worked in the Embassy of Japan in London. JLGC staff would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new boss, and wish him a happy and prosperous stay in London.



Congratulations



The stork has visited Saori Shibata and husband David (both former JLGC staff). The bouncing baby girl, named Itsuki, was born on 18th May, and will be joining mum and dad when they relocate to Japan later this month.

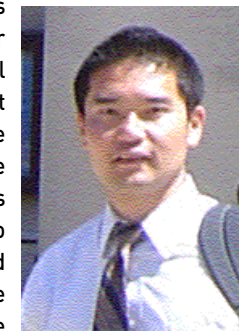


jlgc staff work placements

Peterborough City Council

Terunobu Hino

Ken Nemoto and I went to Peterborough City Council for our work placement. We knew that Peterborough was very similar to industrialized areas close to Tokyo in Japan, so it was very impressive for us to visit Peterborough city council. During the two weeks, we met many officers working at various sections and got lots of useful information from them. Peterborough has been a developing area since 1968, when the first new town plan started, and the population of the area is growing year by year. It takes only 50 minutes to get there from London so many new residents commute to London or other cities. Peterborough City Council puts an emphasis on development through partnership with private companies. We found that it is one of the most appropriate policies for local governments in order to achieve fiscal soundness and provide good services for all the residents. The only local tax in the



UK is council tax and a non-domestic rate is delivered according to population. In that sense, making new townships and increasing the population is an effective policy for improving the finance of a local authority. In Japan, the proportion of local tax is not as big as in the UK, but the variety of local tax is richer than the UK. One of the main local taxes in addition to residential tax is enterprise tax. This means that an important policy for local government is to attract private companies and expect an impact on the overall economy. Thanks to this work placement we got a chance to find out about the differences between the UK and Japan. The most important similarity we recognised is that the policies were different according to the differences in tax systems and national policies, but the principal target for both nations is to improve the 'Quality of Life'. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people we met during our work placement.

Durham County Council

Tomoe Murayama

As the train was approaching Durham Station, the beautiful old cathedral of Durham, a World Heritage site built in 1093, caught our eyes through the window. Very impressive. Before Tetsuya Fukushima and I had an opportunity to visit this alluring countryside for our two week work placement, we, shamefully, had heard little about Durham County Council.

At the beginning of the first day of our placement, we saw a video showing a digest of what Durham County Council does. Its priorities are education, social services and the environment. Indeed, we were amazed at the primary school pupils' high literacy of IT facilities, residential homes made up of independent flats, and the Digestive that is the first in the UK. It is obvious that there is a long way to go to solve the current issues faced by this region – an urgent need to find new industries to take the place of steel and coal mining which brought prosperity in the mid 1900's, the aging population, and low motivation of youngsters to progress to higher education. All the more for those difficulties, the staff working in the County Council should be positive and creative and in fact, they really are. One of the big projects, building the NetPark – the hub of the County's knowledge-based industries and high quality manufacturing companies, made me recall the 'Crystal valley plot', one of the strategies in Mie prefecture, my home authority in Japan, aiming to build a global hub of liquid crystal industry. We are certainly in global competition at the local level!

Talking about environmental issues was absorbing. We heard that the recovery rate in Durham County Council 2003-4 was 17% (recycled 17%, compost 3.2%), quite close figure to that of Japan, 15% in 2001 and rising. Particularly impressive was the strong partnership concerning environmental issues and sustainable development.

The placement made us aware again that the entire work of one local authority is linked in one ring, and global issues are actually based on local life.

We'd like to thank all the people we met in Durham County Council. We appreciate everything. Someday we will be back there again!



Derbyshire County Council

Hisashi Tanaka

My colleague, Ms Tomomi Inoue, and I visited Derbyshire County Council from 28 June to 9 July.

The County of Derbyshire lies in the centre of England, forming the north-west part of the East Midlands Region. There are a wide variety of different areas, which together constitute nearly 2% of the land area of England, from the rural agricultural west to the urban manufacturing east, and the Peak District National Park.

Derbyshire County Council covers 3 borough and 5 districts councils and there are 241 town and parish councils, serving a total population of about 730,000 (excluding Derby city).

Our 2 weeks work placement (including one day at Derby City Council) was an impressive and informative experience, and it covered almost everything we wanted to find out.

During our training, my special interests – health, welfare, environmental issues, public transport and education, and Ms Inoue's special interests – diversity issues, regeneration, city planning and performance management, were explained and described politely by the staff. We also visited Council's facilities and sites such as the public Library, the Markham Employment Growth Zone site, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, and a high school and primary school. All the staff we met were earnest and proud of their work, so we really understood why Derbyshire County Council had obtained an "excellent" evaluation at 1st CPA.

We had an opportunity to attend the Chair's Reception with the "Friendship Force From Japan" and I came across some people from my hometown Shizuoka Prefecture. We were also invited to dinner by Mr. David Wilcox, Councillor and his wife. Both events were very enjoyable and memorable.

All the staff at Derbyshire County Council and Derby City Council whom we met were very friendly and took very good care of us. We would like to sincerely thank everyone we met, especially Mr. David Wilcox, Councillor, Mr. Nick Hodgson, Chief Executive, and Mrs. Margaret Collick for organizing such an informative 2 weeks.



This issue sees our two JET Programme participants coming to the end of their first year in Japan; both Roy, who works in Nagano as an Assistant Language Teacher, and Victoria, who is a Coordinator for International Relations in Yamaguchi, have signed up for a second year. Read on to find out what made them want to stay.

So I've only been here 11 months. The word only might sound odd, but I finally feel that, almost a year on, I'm finally settled, figuring out what it's all about and getting to grips with life as a worker. I haven't found my first year of work particularly easy - I find myself twiddling my thumbs in the evening without the university structure of homework. I am exhausted by the time Friday swings round and I resent my early starts that prevent me going drinking every night as I did in times gone by!

However, I've had an excellent few months and I'm feeling more genki now. Work has been really good - I've got involved in a number of projects, particularly the Yamaguchi International Film Festival that was held from 14th - 16th May and had over 800 people attend it - quite a feat in a small city. It was such hard work and highly stressful at times trying to get everything to fall into place, not to mention nerve wracking standing up and introducing the guests in Japanese, but reading the feedback forms it was definitely worth it. It seems that the people that attended really enjoyed it and it has sparked some interest in foreign film and also the three countries featured: Germany, Spain and the UK. I've also become far more pro-active in the community outside of work.

As of April I've been the prefectural representative for AJET (Association of JETs) and I'm also helping out at the Tokyo and local orientations for new JETs this summer, which is keeping me busy. Now I've seen what I can do if I put my mind to it, I feel encouraged to make more effort to stay busy in the coming year as a CIR.

To ease the stress socially I've taken a step back from some of my university friends and realise that I don't have to be out until 2am every morning and have a raring hangover the next day to have had a good time. My parents seem to think it's a sign that I'm growing up; I have to say I'm in no way convinced, but it's still a work in progress!

Victoria Bentley



The end of my first year on the JET Programme is approaching. If you remember, way back in February I decided to stay on the JET Programme for a second year. Despite missing my friends back home, I am optimistic about my second year here in Japan. A large part of this is due to the fact that the nature of my job will change in my second year - I will no longer visit any of my fifteen elementary schools. Instead, I will only be visiting my main senior high school and education centre (my base of operations!)

I am in two minds as to whether I will enjoy my second year more - I love teaching elementary school! I only wish that my visits made more sense! Currently I visit fifteen of them in a year, meaning that generally I visit each school four times a year. Whilst I like the variety, this also means that as a "one-shot" (the technical description of my job) I don't really get to teach anything properly! Instead I am there to reinforce knowledge or to just have fun with students. These visits are always fun-filled, if exhausting. I enjoy playing with the children in the gym - dodgeball, basketball, kickball are great games I play with my students. Of course, playtime also involves my students having fun at my expense, especially in the form of the "kancho". I don't think I'll describe this strange phenomenon here - you need to ask a Japanese person about it (it's really one of those things we don't talk about in polite society!).



Due, in part I think, to the insular nature of Japanese society, the children here really are sweet and innocent - at least in my neck of the woods. They are cute, funny, and are completely different from the average city-based students in a major way - they have little or no "street smarts". The children are lively, well-behaved, and act as you would expect of children in a story book! They differ from British children in that they are more...wholesome! I really can't explain it but suffice to say that they are just more innocent. Even the local "rude boys" in my city aren't that bad! They are/were just underperformers at school. They dye their hair, wear hip-hop clothing and hang out in the city square all day, but if you talk to them they are actually pretty decent guys. They aren't rude or abusive the way their equivalents would be back home - I personally find them quite amusing! I suppose that is because I live in a farming city!

On my last visit to one of my elementary schools, some of the students asked me when my next visit would be. When I replied that I wouldn't be returning, they started crying! It's sweet gestures like this that I will miss next year. I have taken to telling them that I don't know when my visit will be...a white lie is better than making them cry!!! Year Two - here I come!!!

Roy Fu

International Links

English Garden Steals the Show at Pacific Flora 2004

Christopher Watson

A traditional English garden is one of the main attractions at Pacific Flora, the six-month long international garden and horticulture exhibition being held from April to October 2004 at Lake Hamana in Shizuoka Prefecture.

The West Midlands English Garden is one of more than twenty international gardens being shown at Pacific Flora. With its thatched gardener's hut, a pergola, a well, and an intriguing water feature, the garden combines both the formal and informal elements for which the English gardening tradition is famous.

Designed by Robin Williams of the Royal Horticultural Society, the garden is characteristic of those found in the West Midlands of England - a region centred on Birmingham but containing a blend of both town and country, including Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare; Worcester and the Malvern Hills, so strongly associated with the music of Sir Edward Elgar; Coventry, well-known as a focus for international reconciliation; and the pottery towns of North Staffordshire, the home of Wedgwood and other world famous china manufacturers.



Planting an English oak tree

There is a special relationship between the West Midlands Region and Shizuoka Prefecture which has enabled the two regions since 1995 to share in cultural, educational and people-to-people exchange. The West Midlands Region is proud to have been invited to take part in Pacific Flora and to present The West Midlands English Garden to the five million or more people that are expected to visit the exhibition between 8 April and 11 October 2004.

Among the 35,000 visitors to Pacific Flora on 11 May were representatives from the West Midlands Region, visiting Shizuoka



Prefecture to meet Governor Yoshinobu Ishikawa and to present the English West Midlands Day, one of a series of international days taking place at Pacific Flora. The events in the purpose-built 1,000 seat amphitheatre included performances by young British people working in Shizuoka Prefecture on the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme; and a concert by Fuji Muse Flute Ensemble, featuring English and Japanese music. A tea ceremony was presented in The West Midlands English Garden by Nihon Sado Juku (Japanese Tea Ceremony School), symbolising friendship and cultural exchange between Japan and Britain and recalling the visit by members of Nihon Sado Juku to North Staffordshire in September 2002.

Alongside the amphitheatre was a display of Jaguar and Range Rover cars, representing the best of British and West Midlands manufacturing industry. Information on tourism opportunities in Britain, especially featuring gardens, was provided by the Tokyo Office of Visit Britain; and the British Embassy in Japan promoted 'The English Garden.' at Pacific Flora on both its Japanese and English websites.

The visitors from the West Midlands were Councillor Bransby Thomas, Chair of the West Midlands Regional Assembly; Councillor Colin Beardwood, Member of the Assembly and Chair of its European and International Affairs Partnership; and Mr Christopher Watson of the University of Birmingham who is Project Director (West Midlands) for the link between the West Midlands Region and Shizuoka Prefecture.

The exhibition area of Pacific Flora covers 56 hectares and the exhibition represents the best in fields as varied as horticultural technology, a variety of plant collections, innovative displays and a re-creation of the artist Claude Monet's house and garden at Giverny in France.

The international section of the exhibition contains gardens from countries such as Australia, Thailand, China, Italy, the United States of America and the Netherlands. The West Midlands English Garden is the only international garden from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and is one of the most popular with visitors to Pacific Flora.

Tea ceremony in the West Midlands Garden



Other elements in the four-day programme for the West Midlands delegation were visits to an elementary school, a high tech company in the field of optical technology, a research institute for the tea industry, advanced medical facilities including the state-of-the-art Shizuoka Cancer Centre, and projects promoting culture and tourism in the Prefecture. A high point of the visit was a meeting with Governor Yoshinobu Ishikawa at which plans were discussed for the future development of the relationship between the West Midlands Region and Shizuoka Prefecture.

Shizuoka Prefecture, with a population of 3.78 million, is situated in the centre of Japan, mid-way between the cities of Tokyo and Nagoya, both of which are about 110 miles from the prefectural capital, Shizuoka City. Shizuoka is bordered to the north by the Southern Japan Alps and to the south by the Pacific Ocean. It is famous as the home of Mount Fuji which, at 3776 metres, is Japan's highest mountain. The Prefecture is a leading manufacturing and agricultural area. The main industrial products are motorcycles, musical instruments, pulp and paper products, woodworking and other industrial machines. Agricultural products include citrus fruit and melons, green tea and Japanese horseradish or wasabi. Shizuoka has excellent cultural facilities such as the Prefectural Museum of Art and 'Granship', the recently-built Convention and Arts Centre. The Prefecture was one of the principal locations for the 2002 FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan and the England-Brazil match was played at the purpose-built Shizuoka Stadium Ecopa.

Christopher Watson is Project Director (West Midlands), West Midlands Region - Shizuoka Prefecture Link. He is based at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, School of Public Policy, The University of Birmingham.



Governor, senior Assembly politicians and WM delegation at the Welcome Dinner

1. The background is described in 'West Midlands and Shizuoka: A Friendship based on Common Purpose' Myriad Leaves issue 38 Spring 2002 page 3



Japanese Local Representatives' Information Exchange Conference

Newcastle 2004 Toru Ageta

Local authorities in Japan do not only second staff to CLAIR offices – which in Europe are JLGC London and JLGC Paris – but some also have independent offices, mostly run by one person, located in a variety of countries and cities. Representatives gather for an annual information exchange meeting, held alternately in France and the UK, organised by JLGC London and Paris respectively. JLGC London held this year's meeting in Newcastle on July 17-18.

The main objective of the "Japanese Local Representatives' Information Exchange Conference" is to build a network of Japanese local government staff working in Europe to allow them to cooperate and tackle their assignments more easily. 25 members of the total 42 staff in Europe (excluding JLGC personnel) participated in this conference.

During the conference, we discussed issues regarding exchange of people and economy. We came to the conclusion that we should share more information in future. In order to overcome language barriers and other difficulties when working abroad, it is important to cooperate with Japanese local government staff in other European countries.

After our initial information exchange meeting, Consul General Tsutomu Hiraoka, (Consulate

General of Japan in Edinburgh), joined us and gave a lecture on the proposed Regional Assembly in Northern England. On the second day, we visited One North East (the Regional Development Agency for the North East) and Newcastle City Council. Mr. Kevin Aisbitt and Mr. Barry Richardson introduced their inward investment strategy and how to conduct successful regeneration and drive economic development. Many of the participants are involved in inward investment to Japan, so these presentations were particularly relevant and useful.

There are many similarities between local Japanese cities today and the North East of England of the 80's; both have suffered a long recession. The success of the North East's active regeneration strategy is an inspiration to the participants of our conference, who face the same mission of reviving their respective local economies in Japan.

I would like to express my gratitude for the hospitality of all the staff of One North East and Newcastle City Council. Our conference would not have been possible without their kindness and cooperation.



How Do You Vote?

Toru Ageta

Local elections for Mayor of London and London Assembly members were held on June 10th, alongside an election for seats in the European Parliament. I had been watching this election since April and noticed many differences between British and Japanese elections.

Election time in Japan is obvious. Each candidate's publicity car runs around town, screaming the candidate's name through a loudspeaker, while staff wave their white-gloved hands. Signboards of the smiling candidates are put up all over town. The candidates make full volume speeches through their loudspeakers in busy streets and railway stations. Winning Japanese elections depends on how many people you shake hands with, how hard you drive the publicity car around your ward, and how well you make your residents remember your name.

In contrast to Japan, London was very quiet. I saw no posters of candidates. I could seldom find publicity cars with loudspeakers. Some people put posters of their party in the windows or the garden of their houses, but they didn't stand out too much, and the views of London were not suffocated.

To win an election, British candidates dedicate themselves to "arguing their policies". They debate with their opponent using their party's official manifestos. They visit or telephone their supporters and distribute flyers. During the run-up to this election for Mayor of London, many hustings were held by various organisations. I went to the one held at the University of London Union. If Japanese students tried to hold Mayoral hustings, it would be very difficult to gather all the main candidates, so I was surprised that all the main parties' candidates attended this event. Tim Donovan, BBC London political newscaster, was guest chairman and chaired the event brilliantly, turning a blind eye to the fact that one candidate took too much time and the audience were left unsure of what he was saying.

A feature of British elections is that the "party" and its "policies" are at the heart of the race. Japanese candidates tend to emphasise their ability to contribute to the ward like attracting infrastructure construction budgets. British people make more of the party and its policies, not the candidate's personal character. That is why it's rare that an independent candidate wins an election other than in rural areas. In Japan people who don't support any parties are increasing, and more and more independent Governors and Mayors are appearing all over Japan. Since Japanese people focus on the candidate than the party, it's not as difficult as in the UK for an independent candidate to win national and local elections.

Another big difference is that less money is spent on British elections. British elections are very clean, do not cost so much, and few people violate election rules. The law prescribes that the ceiling of money for each candidate is around 5,000-10,000 GBP (depending on area and population of the ward). Japanese law does not prescribe such a ceiling. Some say it costs 150,000-250,000 GBP to win



Japanese parties followed the example of British parties in making manifestos in the November 2003 general election.

prefectural councillor and 350,000-500,000 GBP for prefectural governor. However, although the money for each candidate is regulated in their ward, the money spent by parties is not regulated at all, so the party can spend lots of money on newspaper advertising, the party's central executive's campaign, and so on. As a result, candidates put their party at the forefront during election, rather than appealing his or her charm in the ward. British candidates are supported by their party so heavily that they are bound to the party's policies and principles. On the other hand, Japanese candidates, even those who belong to a party, fight elections supported not only by their party but also by their own ability (network, celebrity and money in the ward). That is why it's easier for each politician in the party to insist on their own opinion and oppose the party's policy. These facts lead to the difference between "the Party is important" (in the UK) and "the candidate's personality is important" (as in Japan).

It is usual for British candidates to use personal holiday during elections, and go back to their jobs if they lose. One of the candidates for Mayor of London fought the election without resigning his MP position and he continues to keep his MP position after failing to become Mayor. In Japan you usually have to quit your job to fight an election, so even if you are very efficient and enthusiastic, it's hard to make the decision to announce your candidacy.

With regard to media, the election for Mayor of London had been argued in some newspapers and magazines, and BBC London set Mayoral hustings on TV. However, other than Mayor of London, the media doesn't cover local elections with as much interest as they do with general elections. In Japan, as local elections have a big impact on our daily lives, the media covers them with as much interest as national elections. In the UK, generally speaking, most coverage comes from the BBC and broadsheet newspapers. As a result, the average turnout percentage for local elections in the UK is 25-35; very low. The turnout for local elections in Japan is falling, but the situation is better than the UK; the average percentage is over 50%. British central government has strong power and controls local governments; they don't have enough independent revenue (only 20% of all revenue), and there are limitations for reform. That is perhaps one of the reasons why residents are not interested in local elections.

British elections are 'smarter' than Japanese elections. I think we should hold many debates like in the UK and argue our policies under an appropriate chairman. In order to do that, Japanese residents and media have to study more and judge candidate's policies, rather than just complain about current situations.

STAFF INTERVIEW : TETSUYA FUKUSHIMA



Mr. Fukushima is one of our new members of staff, and was unfortunate enough to be picked out of the hat as this issue's staff interviewee. Seconded from Kumamoto prefecture on the beautiful island of Kyushu, his research area is local government systems in Norway.



When and why did you first become interested in politics?

a I gradually become interested in politics from high school, however, I especially become interested in them when I started to live alone as a college student.

How did you end up at the JLGC?

a I saw a circular looking for a JLGC worker at my previous office in Kumamoto Prefecture. I decided to apply for it because I have wanted to live abroad since I was a college student. To tell the truth, I didn't think that I would be chosen from amongst all the applicants because their English was better than mine. So I am very happy to be at JLGC and living in the U.K.

What are the best and worst things about your job?

a The best things are to learn directly about the U.K. in English and also to experience a lot of different things in Japan. The worst thing is only my poor English. It's very difficult to understand various English accents in the U.K. I think I need more time to get used to them.

What's the first thing you would change if you became Prime Minister?

a First of all, I would change selfish politicians' minds.

Is there any policy that you would "import" from Japanese local government? (If so, what is it?)

a The two-tier system everywhere. Compare to the English system (one, two or three-tier system), it's easier for people to understand.

Is there any British policy you would implement in Japan? (If so, what is it?)

a I'm sorry, but I can't tell yet. I'm only learning about them now.

What single thing would most improve your life?

a Now, English speaking ability would most improve my life.

Who is your political hero and why?

a Robert Kennedy. He could change people's minds to think what they can do for the country.

You can invite any celebrity to dinner. Who is it, and why?

a I like movies. I'd invite Robert De Niro because I think he is one of the best actors in the world, so I want to talk with him and take his some energy.

What's your greatest achievement?

a Becoming a father. Thanks to my wife and daughter.

What was your most embarrassing moment?

a When I wore a white dinner jacket for my wedding reception six years ago. Unfortunately, it was not suitable for me compared with Japanese hakama (long pleated culotte-like Japanese trousers), so it made my friends burst into laughter.

What is the biggest problem with local government today?

a Financial crisis.

How would you solve it?

a I think that we need long-range plans and patience.

You miss something that is widely available in Japan, but is impossible to get here. What is it?

a Like most Japanese, I miss spa and sauna bath. I also miss various kinds of fresh fish. I really want to eat *sashimi* (sliced raw fish).

When and where are you most happy?

a I'm most happy at my flat when I'm relaxed and with my family (wife and a daughter) doing something they like on a weekend. Moreover, they are calm because I'm sometimes confused with their simultaneous requests.

What is your favourite karaoke song and why?

a It is "Ashita ga aru" (It means 'we have tomorrows') because I agree with its words and I want to take such thought in my life especially when I meet any hardship.

Your house is on fire. What possession do you grab first?

a Absolutely, I'd grab and hug my five-year-old daughter first.

Founding Conference of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

Paris, May 2-5 2004 Irmelind Kirchner, Research and Policy Manager

A new world-wide organisation representing local government is taking shape after 10 years of negotiations, amalgamating the IULA (International Union of Local Authorities), FMCU (Federation Mondiale des Cités Unies, also called United Towns Organisation) and METROPOLIS. Its founding congress was held in Paris on the first weekend in May.

CLAIR was well represented with five participants: two from the Tokyo office, three from Paris, and me from London.

Other delegations from Japan included one from Kyoto, whose Deputy Mayor gave a presentation in one of the workshops, and one from Hamamatsu City, which recently became a full member of IULA and is now a member of the new organisation.

The congress had several aspects: first, it was a celebration of the founding of the organisation and an opportunity from members of the different founding bodies to come together; secondly, it was an assertion of local government vis-à-vis central governments (it had a lot of central government attention, with Jacques Chirac giving the opening address, and the presidents of Portugal and Senegal present); and thirdly, it was a forum for developed and less developed countries to come together with

the aim of sharing knowledge and learning from each other.

At this conference, the turn-out from English-speaking countries and from the Nordic countries, Germany included, was rather low. There were only 10 participants from the UK, all connected to the LGIB rather than representing individual local governments, and 11 from Germany, of which some held elected office and represented other organisations (such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions) rather than individual authorities. Other European countries had larger delegations: there were close to 50 Austrian participants. The large contingent from Africa (French-speaking) and South America also meant that discussions often focussed on development issues and became very political.

The secretariat of the new organisation is in Barcelona; its new secretary general is Ms. Elisabeth Gateau, the long-term head of the secretariat of the Council of the Municipalities and Regions of Europe. It remains to be seen how effective the new organisation will be, however almost everybody I spoke to welcomed the development towards one unified body speaking for local authorities in cities worldwide.



Race4City Hall



Andrew Stevens tells us about the news site he ran during the London elections recently

The idea for the Race 4 City Hall website (www.race4cityhall.org.uk) came from the briefings I was supplying to colleagues at JLGC and the Japan Embassy on the elections for the London Mayor and Assembly and the fact that no similar site existed to supply daily news on the campaign and its candidates. I knew the technology was there and simple to master and after a few moments registration of a blog and a web address, I was ready to go. My intention was to encapsulate all the coverage of the race that existed in the

English news media on the net as well as picking up what the candidates themselves posted on their own sites, a sort of one-stop-shop for anyone interested in the election. The site developed organically at first, through trial and error, but soon enough I developed a format and the site began to pick up recognition elsewhere on the internet.

Updating the site continually was not as easy as I thought it would be, ensuring it was up to date as possible round the clock was quite a laborious task – if I was ever out of the office for long periods of time I had to dash into net cafes to make sure it remained maintained. But the site did pick up notable mentions and acclaim from other political news sites (such as citymayors.com), councillors' websites and that of an MP. A researcher from Essex University interviewed me about the site and one candidate from the GLA elections even claimed that the site had helped him track the activity of the opposition in his (failed) bid to become an Assembly Member. I think by the next elections this kind of site will be commonplace but it was rewarding to know that I was the first.

JAPAN EXCHANGE AND STUDY TOUR

First Japan, then USA and now China

Sue Smith, Deputy Chief Executive, Lichfield District Council



I was fortunate to participate in JEST in 2002 and thoroughly enjoyed my time in Tokyo and Shiga Prefecture. For me an extra bonus was the opportunity to meet delegates from other countries attending the conference in Tokyo. Little did I realise how significant that event would be.

Two business cards in particular have been of particular significance. Last year, en route to a visit to our counterparts in Lichfield, Connecticut, I was able to experience a fascinating visit to Boston City Hall to see Lisa Signori, the Chief Finance Officer, who had been part of the USA delegation to JEST 2002. In May 2004 I was able to arrange for Wendy Thompson, Director of the Office of Public Service Reform and the Prime Minister's advisor on local government to visit Boston City Hall and to meet with Lisa, whilst Wendy was on a visit to Harvard University.

On my return from the Study Tour, I received a fax from Shenyang from Du Yongcheng, who had

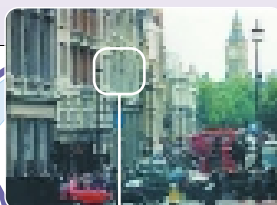
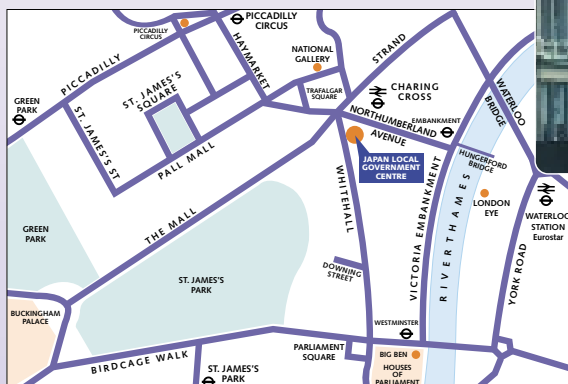
been part of the Chinese delegation, asking us for information on Lichfield. Since then, we have received two delegations from Shenyang, Staffordshire University have a partnership with Shenyang University, we have employed Du Yongcheng's son Jiang as a trainee for 6 months and in June 2004 a delegation of 5 people from Lichfield will be visiting Shenyang. We are also going to take the opportunity to visit Beijing, Xian, Shanghai and Suzhou.

I am grateful to the Japan Local Government Centre and to CLAIR for providing this tremendous opportunity.

The 2004 Japan Exchange and Study Tour will take place 14-23 November. After the Tokyo seminar, participants will be based in Shizuoka Prefecture. The deadline for applications has already passed for this year, but anyone interested in participating in the 2005 Tour should contact Angela Harkness Robertson.

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View from Trafalgar Square London office is on the first floor of the building which has the blue signboard on the centre of the picture



The Japan Local Government Centre is the UK office of CLAIR – the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, and is a joint organisation representing local government in Japan's 47 prefectures and 12 major cities.

With its head office in Tokyo, and branch offices in each of the 59 local authorities' International Relations Divisions, CLAIR has 7 other overseas offices – in Beijing, New York, Paris, Singapore, Seoul, Sydney and the United Kingdom.

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