

万葉

MYRIAD LEAVES

THE JOURNAL OF THE JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTRE • LONDON
FEATURING ASPECTS OF JAPANESE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

春の野にすみれ摘みにと来しわれぞ
野をなつかしみ一夜寝にける

haru no no ni
sumire tumi ni to
koshi warezo
no wo natsukashimi
hitoyo ne ni keru

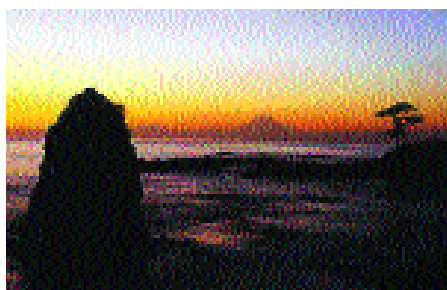
Violet gathering, into the
vernal fields I went.
So beautiful were the fields
That I slept the night
In the open air.

YAMABE-NO-AKAHITO

MYRIAD LEAVES

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'.

2002



Tateishi (Monolith), Akiya Beach,
Yokosuka City (Kanagawa Prefecture)



Spring Colours, Azuchi (Shiga Prefecture)



Sunpu Castle (Shizuoka Prefecture)



Okayama Castle (Okayama Prefecture)

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Foreigners Given the Right to Vote

One of the direct consequences of Japan's self-imposed closure from the outside world during the Sakoku period (1600-1867), is its cultural and social homogeneity. Over a hundred years later, non-Japanese residents are only just creeping past 2% of the total population, and many foreigners are still seen as a novelty, frequently on the receiving end of pointing fingers and cries of "Gaijin da!" (It's a foreigner!).

The vast majority of foreign residents are of Korean descent, many of whom came to live in Japan during World War II, and have now been permanent residents over several generations. Calling Japanese-born Koreans immigrants is very controversial, yet until recently they had to carry thumb-printed Alien Registration ID cards. Japanese-born Koreans still face many other forms of discrimination and they and other foreign residents are denied many rights enjoyed by Japanese citizens.

One of these is the right to participate in political processes – both on a local and national level. However this has been under review since 1993, when the Supreme Court was forced to reassess its ruling concerning foreign resident involvement in local public affairs. In 1998, Mr Kim Dae Jung, President of the Republic of Korea, spoke to Keizo Obuchi, the late Japanese Prime Minister, requesting that permanent residents from Korea be given the right to vote. The answer to the request was a promise to investigate the matter.



National Diet Building, Tokyo Prefecture

Four years later, the first concrete outcome of this promise finally materialised in the town of Maihara, Shiga Prefecture, which became the first Japanese local authority to allow foreigners with permanent residency status to vote. Town Mayor, Toshio Muranishi, argued that 'foreign residents should have a forum to express their views', and consequently set out to propose the bill. Admittedly this is only a small step forward, as the right to vote applies to a one-off plebiscite. Eligible foreign residents must be

over 20 years, have been a resident in Japan for over 3 years, and have lived in the town for more than 3 months. Whilst this is excellent news, it seems that equality was not the driving force behind this decision: turnout for the plebiscite needed to exceed 50% in order to validate its result, and including foreign residents increased the chances of a higher turnout. In this respect the Maihara proposal was not a landmark move, and attitudes towards foreign residents remain mixed.

Perhaps more impressive than the Maihara experiment is the news that a Westerner has become a member of the Diet for the Democratic Party of Japan. Marutei Tsurunen, born Martti Turunen, is a naturalised Japanese citizen originally from Finland. He first went to Japan 35 years ago, starting out as a missionary and becoming a teacher and translator. After meeting and marrying a Japanese woman, Turunen decided to spend the rest of his life in the country and wrote a book entitled "I want to be Japanese". He even altered his name to make it sound Japanese. His political career began as an independent council member in a town in Kanagawa Prefecture. He then campaigned for a seat in the House of Councillors as a member of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan four times unsuccessfully, urging electors to choose real change by voting for a "blue-eyed lawmaker". At 62 he has finally achieved his goal.



Marutei Tsurunen, New Diet Member for Democratic Party of Japan.

Tsurunen hopes to build on 35 years' experience as a foreign resident to bring a different outlook into politics. He has vowed to work at reducing corruption in society and politics, to champion environmental issues and to tackle racial discrimination in society; in particular, he hopes to improve conditions for non-Japanese residents such as third or fourth generation Koreans, many of whom were born and brought up in Japan and have never even visited Korea, yet are still considered foreign. Tsurunen says he thinks of himself as an "international" person rather than a Finn or Japanese, and hopes that his views as an outsider will make a difference to the way foreigners are perceived.

With both the chance to vote in a plebiscite, and a Westerner taking up his seat in the Upper Chamber of Parliament, non-Japanese residents are making their presence felt; Japan is slowly waking up to the concepts of a heterogeneous Japanese population, and recognition of civic rights for all its residents.

West Midlands and Shizuoka: A Friendship Based on Common Features

The West Midlands is a rich and varied region, with Birmingham, one of the core centres of the industrial revolution as its heart, and various cultural and artistic “meccas”, such as Shakespeare’s birthplace of Stratford-upon-Avon. As well as being the nation’s industrial powerhouse, the region is also renowned worldwide for attracting “green tourism”, for those who appreciate its natural beauty and landscapes. Situated in the middle of England, it is known abroad as the “Heart of England”.

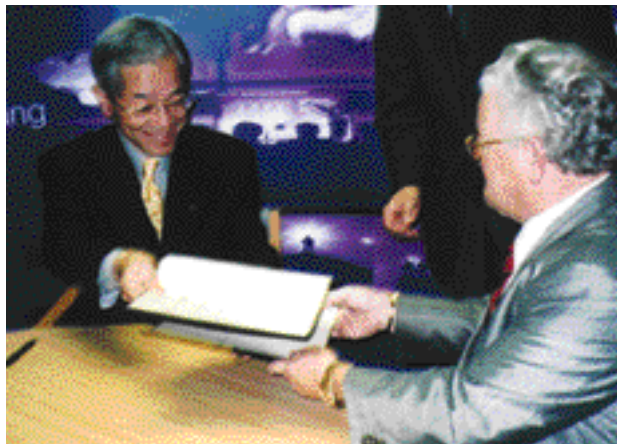
Shizuoka is also the centre of the Japanese mainland, renowned for its beauty spots of Mount Fuji and the Izu peninsular. It shares the same industrial heritage as the West Midlands, being one of Japan’s great manufacturing centres, with motorbikes and pharmaceuticals as its main industries. Shizuoka is home to the country’s major tea plantations, and enjoys its highest productivity rate. Recently, Shizuoka has been enjoying a period of cultural revival, through sport and the arts: in 1999, it hosted the “Theatre Olympics”, which is a large international theatre festival, and was the focus of British football fans during the England-Brazil World Cup quarter final.

The first step in the longstanding relationship between the West Midlands and Shizuoka was when in 1995, West Midlands received a request to find a Japanese authority as a partner in international exchange activities, and through the Japan Local Government Centre was put in touch with Shizuoka Prefecture. In 1998, a delegation from the West Midlands visited the prefecture, and Shizuoka reciprocated in 2000 with a visit to study how best to take exchange projects forward. August 2001 saw the fruits of the study visit when a school choir from Birmingham went over to Japan to hold a joint concert with the Shizuoka Youth Orchestra, followed by a performance by the Shizuoka Philharmonia school choir over here. Also in that month the international youth soccer cup was hosted by Shizuoka, and the local Wolverhampton Wanderers youth team not only made the trip to Japan to participate but came home with the cup!

It came as no surprise that with so many exchanges happening at various levels, both sides felt they wanted to consolidate their agreement, and they decide to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding. The prefectural governor of Shizuoka, Mr Ishikawa, duly travelled to Birmingham in November, and on the 19th, exchanged documents with Councillor Reg Plane, the then Chairman of the West Midlands Local Government Association. The document reads as follows:

1. The West Midlands Local Government Association and Shizuoka Prefectural Government wish to encourage mutual co-operation for the benefit of the people who work and live in their respective areas and in the interests of international goodwill and understanding.
2. Respecting each other’s culture and people, both parties recognise that co-operation can be achieved through collaboration and exchange in various fields such as culture and education with particular emphasis on people to people exchange.

As far as Shizuoka Prefecture is concerned, the benefits derived from these exchanges have been manifold: the more obvious one is giving different parts of the community a chance to experience a



Signing the Memorandum of Understanding between Shizuoka and West Midlands

different culture, of course, but there has also been a ripple effect in economic development and tourism felt by local businesses and infrastructure; the prefectural government also feels it has helped its long-term vision of helping to foster a natural openness to other cultures and ways of life in its residents, through cultural and artistic exchange.

The first joint project after the signing of the document was a joint entry at this year’s Chelsea Flower Show. This was not only a showcase example of the successful partnership between the two regions, but also a vehicle for promoting Pacific Flora 2004, the forthcoming huge International Horticultural Fair hosted by Shizuoka. The West Midlands are currently studying the possibility of participating in Pacific Flora 2004. The next joint project involves healthy exercise, as the Kakegawa Walking Association comes over in August to join the Staffordshire Branch of the Ramblers Association for some forays into the local countryside.



Shizuoka and West Midlands Chelsea Flower Show

The Memorandum of Understanding runs for five years initially, but it is hoped that the enthusiasm which kickstarted the exchange will continue to transcend the linguistic, geographical and cultural obstacles in order that the benefits of joint activities be enjoyed by many generations to come.



Reform for Japanese High Schools

The repercussions of Japan's rapidly ageing society, coupled with a decreasing birth rate as more women choose to have careers or put off having children until later, are already being felt in schools, where numbers are dwindling. As more and more schools face problems of bullying, truancy, delinquency and even crime, there is also a feeling that something is just not quite right with children's education and upbringing, which in turn has spurred central and local governments to introduce reforms.

Reform of the School Week

Japan's schoolchildren faced a shortened schoolweek when they began their new academic year this April, as the Ministry of Education put an end to the 100 year tradition of state schools operating a six day week. By abolishing Saturday lessons, pupils will see their workload reduced by almost a third, and classroom study hours will decrease by 100 hours a year.

The Ministry of Education believes this new curriculum will help to encourage children to develop a life beyond academia. Under the previous system, too much time was spent over the six schooldays on cramming facts in the classroom, to the extent that the acquisition of vital personal skills, such as independence, creativity and reasoning, was often neglected. Family life also took to the backburner as children often spent their Saturdays with their teachers rather than their parents: fathers, especially, were unable to fulfil their duties as role models for their children, and to teach self-discipline and the values of 'right' and 'wrong'. (see box).

This is why, despite the glowing history of academic achievement in Japan – rated among the highest in the world in most subjects and number one in maths, Mr Hironobu Asami, who heads the Ministry's curriculum section, claims that "it is not enough anymore". Japan needs to concentrate on producing innovative thinkers, rather than students who are proficient at passing exams. Mr Shumon Miura, a former chairman of the National Curriculum Committee, believes Japanese society should no longer judge people by the schools they attended, but rather by their experience and potential as well as their individual achievements.

The reduction in schooltime is an attempt to step away from the national pre-occupation with work and runs in conjunction with government plans to introduce more national holidays and reduce working hours in the office. Although this sounds like a welcome move, it is proving to be unsettling for many:

whilst teachers will enjoy an extra day's holiday, and parents can spend more time with their children, there are concerns that children will not have time to study sufficiently to graduate, and will then struggle to compete with others in the fierce university entrance system as well as later in the job market.

On the other hand, private schools, which continue to operate a six-day week, hope to benefit from these parental concerns; many of them have experienced increased intakes as parents feel pressurised into paying for more classroom hours to give their children the best possible chances. Also, in a backlash to the reduced school week, more children have been attending cram schools in the evenings and at weekends - thus rendering the five-day week reform meaningless. Therefore, instead of alleviating the

Revolution in the Hearts

Revolution in the Hearts and Minds of Tokyoites is a Metropolitan Government (TMG) initiative to encourage parents and all other adults to assume a greater responsibility for the city's children - the people who will serve on the front lines of our society in the next generation. Adults must help children to cultivate a sense of justice, a sense of morality and a caring attitude, by teaching them the rules they must follow to live as fully mature members of society.

As a major provider of public policy and information in Japan, the TMG feels that it must take the lead in addressing the serious issue of the widespread failure of children to observe even the most basic rules of society. The Action Plan for Revolution in the Hearts and Minds of Tokyoites (drawn up in August 2000) presents clear guidelines on how individual Tokyo citizens can help solve this problem, along with administrative measures to support these actions. In addition, the plan expresses the hope that Revolution in the Hearts and Minds of Tokyoites will take root as a movement throughout the whole of society.

In addition to the growing incidence of violent and disruptive acts by our morally adrift youth, more and more children seem unable to observe the most basic rules of our society. Such children appear to have the following characteristics in common:

- 1) self-centred personality, a lack of role models and a careless attitude
- 2) an inability to control desires and urges, insufficient skill in solving problems verbally and a lack of self-esteem.

Some of the contributing factors to these problems are:

1. the falling number of children in families
2. the emergence of an information-oriented society
3. increasing material wealth and urbanisation
4. the harm resulting from the adoption of mistaken concepts of individualism and egalitarianism.

We could say that all these social changes have resulted in a decline in the educational effectiveness of the homes, schools and communities in which our children are raised

Aims of the Revolution in the Hearts and Minds of Tokyoites

1. Basic Principles for Raising Children

- a) Children should observe social rules and keep commitments to others.
- b) Children should develop a caring attitude.
- c) Children should develop self-discipline.
- d) Children should develop a sense of responsibility and a sense of justice.
- e) Children should learn to appreciate the joy in helping others.

2. Action Principles

- a) Parents and all other adults should take responsibility for implementing the actions of the plan.
- b) All of society should work together on the plan.

3. Objectives of the Plan Actions

- a) To carefully teach children the basic rules of society
- b) To help children learn how to relate to others through their experiences

Specific Tasks of the Revolution in the Hearts and Minds of Tokyoites

1. Action-oriented Tasks

The plan lays down 35 concrete tasks to be tackled by the various agents; homes, schools, communities and society.

TASKS FOR THE HOME

- Always start the day with "good morning" and finish the day with "good night."
- Reprimand your children when they treat others badly.
- Be grateful if a schoolteacher or other adult reprimands your children.
- Teach your children self-control by not giving them everything they ask for.
- Teach your children to endure heat and cold.
- Fathers should actively communicate with their children from an early age.
- Family members should try to eat meals together and enjoy each other's company.
- Set family rules and organise events within the family.
- Parents and children should have some common hobbies.



SAITAMA



SHIGA



SHIMANE



SHIZUOKA



TOCHIGI



TOKUSHIMA



TOKYO



TOTTORI

BRASSTACKS

workload, it seems that the new policy has added extra pressure to children and their parents to find alternative means of study, to compensate for the day lost at school.

For Tokyo Metropolitan Government, high school reform is not just limited to reducing school hours. The reforms are embodied in a 4 year plan, which covers consolidation and creation of new schools, new roles, management reform and increased pastoral care. In 1997, the government conducted a survey of its residents to assess their opinion of suggested reforms, and based its long-term future plan on the results. Three main policies emerged from this:

Appointing New Style School Managers

A reform of the law has made it possible since January 2000 for a high school to appoint a principal with neither qualifications nor

experience in education, though the appointment has to be approved by the Education Commission. TMG has embraced this reform, recognising the contributions someone from a completely different sector and background can make; strong leadership skills, a sense of service, accounting and managerial experience, and efficiency are some of the attributes TMG wishes to inject into its high schools. This break from tradition also follows the introduction of new types of schools, such as commerce high schools or college preparatory high schools (see below), and two "new-style" principals have already been appointed to head one of these each, in 2004 and 2003 respectively. A former company director and sportsman is currently the principal of the Metropolitan Takashima High School.

Introducing a New Type of School

Last year, a special status for schools was created, in order to both raise standards of high schools generally and highlight achievements from certain schools specifically. This special status of College Preparatory School, will be conferred onto high schools which have showed particular skills or commitment in encouraging pupils to go on to higher levels of education. Criteria for selection include holding lecture series and special tuition sessions, introducing counselling and guidance services, devising their own independent examination papers and other innovations. Four schools have been indentified as pilots so far, and the progress of their pupils will be monitored until March 2004. TMG has committed itself to support the pilot schools as much as possible in terms of appointing suitable counsellors and educators to them and help in devising a suitable curriculum; they will also be providing other schools within the authority with regular reports on the pilot schools' progress in order to inspire them and help raise their academic and pastoral care standards.

Introducing the Concept of School Plans

Up until recently, there were no specific management systems in place in high schools, nor were any specific goals or targets identified. The idea of introducing school plans stems from the feeling of lack of direction, and of difficulty in assessing whether or not any goals have been reached. The plan is a year-long process based on the principle of "Kaizen" or continuous improvement, which is one of the features of the traditional quality control system in the private sector, and runs logically from identification of goals, implementation, feedback and assessment through to redefinition/setting of new goals.

and Minds of Tokyoites

- Try not to allow children to get into the habit of always retreating to their own rooms.
- Promote good relationships with neighbours, to the point where you can reprimand other children in the neighbourhood.
- Teach your children to show respect to elderly people.
- Teach your children about the power and beauty of nature by giving them hands-on experience.
- Teach your children about how you work for their sake.

TASKS FOR SCHOOLS

- Teachers should greet students to encourage them to greet others.
- Teachers should reprimand students whenever necessary.
- Inform parents that the responsibility of disciplining their children is ultimately their's.
- Teach students about competition and cooperation through experience of teamwork.
- Provide opportunities through volunteer activities so students can experience the joy of serving others.
- Teach students the importance of work through work- experience programs.
- Teach students the preciousness of life by making them look after animals and plants.
- Make schools a venue where local residents and students can communicate with each other.
- Invite individuals who have rich experiences or admirable personalities to serve as part-time teachers.

TASKS FOR COMMUNITIES

- Adults in local communities and neighbourhoods should make the effort to talk to children.
- Teach children to value the unique local history and culture of the area where they live.
- Organise community clean-ups together with local children.
- Encourage children to actively participate in local events.
- Revive group play activities.
- Local adults should cooperate to give children opportunities for experience-based learning

within their communities.

- Organise activities that allow local elderly citizens to convey their wisdom and experience to children.
- Share knowledge about raising children with other parents in the neighbourhood.

TASKS FOR ALL OF SOCIETY

- People should encourage the exchange of pleasantries such as "thank you" and "excuse me."
- If people see one person treating another badly, point this out with courage.
- Every effort should be made to prevent children from accessing unwholesome, harmful information.
- Companies should make a contribution to raising children properly.

2. Tasks of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government

To support the actions conducted in (1) homes, (2) schools, (3) communities and (4) all of society, from FY2000 the TMG is implementing 47 three-year projects. These projects are aimed at: (1) supporting the actions of Tokyo citizens and private organisations, (2) improving the environment and (3) inspiring motivation.

MAJOR PROJECTS

- Setting up a Children and Home Support Centre.
- Using the Internet to promote support for children and the home.
- Designating promotion model areas for Revolution in the Hearts and Minds of Tokyoites.
- Carrying out public lectures on moral education in selected areas.
- Carrying out identity education programs to give children a stronger sense of being Japanese in the world.
- Setting up and expanding a School Management Liaison Council.
- Enhancing the Raising Children in the Towns Project
- Setting up Family Communication Days (tentative name) (every third Saturday).
- Try & Challenge Communication Month
- Taking initiatives to promote Revolution in the Hearts and Minds of Tokyoites within the TMG offices



NEWS ROUND UP

Electronic Voting In Niimi City

On the 23rd of June this year, the first mayoral and assembly elections to take place fully electronically were held in Niimi City, in Okayama Prefecture. In preparation, the city had already introduced a by-law allowing electronic voting, and invested in the systems required including the hire of 154 voting machines at a cost of 2.5 million JPYen.

Electronic voting is already implemented in countries such as the United States, Brazil and Belgium, but Japan had to wait for new legislation to be passed in November 2001, which allowed the new system for local elections only, that is to say for mayors and prefectural governors and their respective assemblies. Attention focused on this small town of 24,000 people as local authorities around Japan assessed the experience with a view to introducing it themselves.

Opposition to the system had been voiced by residents, especially on behalf of the elderly, many of whom cannot even use a Automatic Teller Machine, and so the mayor, anxious to assuage any fears, held a fullscale practice "election". The outcome was that the system was much simpler to use than feared, and thanks to features such as audible instructions and simple buttons to press, and the fact that there was no need to read or write complicated (Chinese) characters, not only the elderly but others with disabilities found the machines easy to use. Being the first in the country to introduce the system also boosted the pride and sense of local identity of Niimi City's residents, and they embraced the change with enthusiasm.

The merits of electronic voting are numerous, the most obvious one being the speed with which ballots can be collected and counted. Data collected from the city's 154 polling stations was sent to a central computer to be sorted and counted, thereby reducing the usual 5 hours required to 3, including the time spent administering and counting postal and proxy votes. Not only has the speed increased, but the city hall estimated the number of people they would have to ask to help would decrease from the average 90 to only a third. Another advantage was the reduction in invalid ballots: voters can find certain names confusing, especially those with complicated characters, or where the names of two members are pronounced the same but with different spellings and this sort of mistake annuls the vote.

There is, however, a downside to electronic voting, and a major one for small authorities: cost. In fact, a study carried out by the Ministry of General Affairs recommended that hiring machines rather than investing in costly systems would be the way forward if municipalities wanted to introduce electronic voting. There has been no funding policy so far, but the Ministry estimated that an authority of 100,000 electors would require 300 voting machines, and that the total cost of hiring them as well as the added purchase of sorting machines and associated costs would reach 180 million JPYen. So despite the merits of electronic voting such as its effectiveness and user-friendly features, many authorities are balking at the financial burden introducing it would create.

Electronic voting had already been set up in time for the British national elections last May, but the turnout of e-voters was not as high as that of postal votes, so in the UK and in Japan, the debate continues as to whether e-voting is the way forward for local authorities.

noteworthy are cases where authorities are thinking of introducing a special tax allocated to protecting the quality of the water for drinking and domestic usage purposes, or introducing special local by-laws to establish standards for drainage and industrial waste disposal. According to a survey carried out last year by the Ministry of Welfare and Labour, there are currently 180 authorities who have passed local legislation aimed at protecting river sources. Their aims are not only to work together to prevent pollution into rivers and reservoirs and to keep sewage as clean as possible, but also with a view to the future, to set up a quality control framework to maintain the standard and reputation of local bottled drinking water.

Moreover, the current decentralisation laws and consequent review of regional taxes entails the possibility of introducing new taxes, and 23, that is to say half, the prefectural governments are currently studying the possibility of new taxes to finance environmental protection and forestry management. The ways in which these taxes would be levied do vary, from simply increasing residents prefectural tax, to an increase in water charges (which is still the responsibility of the local authority in Japan). Noone has actually introduced new taxation as yet, but many feel that protecting river sources is a priority, which all residents should have a duty to support, and that introducing more regulations in water usage would only have a limited discouraging effect on industry location.

Electronic Bidding in Yokosuka

Picking up the electronic theme again, Yokosuka City has implemented an electronic system for accepting bids for building tenders, enabling the whole process to be done on the Internet.

Up until now, Yokosuka had a list of 9 designated building companies which it had selected through competitive tendering. However, there were ways in which bidders could find out who each other were beforehand, and get together to fix prices and agree to whom the contract would go. Under the new system of competitive tendering, anyone who satisfies the initial criteria can bid for a contract. This has not only made price fixing impossible, the process fairer and more transparent, but has also lead to reduced prices of successful bids as bidders feel the competitive edge. The number of bidders has also increased which in turn has increased the workload of the city government's procurement department dramatically.

Yet, the demand for more procurement staff has not been accounted for in the on-going reform of local government systems. In fact, quite the reverse was expected, since computerising the whole process of tendering is both more cost- and more labour-efficient. That is to say that every step of the process, from advertising tenders and issuing specifications, to receiving bids and assessing them, to finally advertising the results can be carried out electronically. It has had a positive effect on the bidders though, who now no longer need to spend time and money presenting their bids for contracts in person to the city office.

The introduction of electronic tendering is one of the fundamental principles of Prime Minister Koizumi's government's much vaunted structural reforms, and part of his general "direct control" policy. Yokosuka's experience has already attracted the attention of many other local authorities around the country who are studying the possibility of following suit. The city council is certainly hoping to showcase their system to anyone who wishes to visit them, and to persuade their colleagues around the country of the benefits of clarity, efficiency, fairness and the improved competitiveness electronic tendering affords.

Protecting Rivers Sources

A rising number of local authorities in Japan have begun projects to protect the sources of rivers which run through their region, as part of a larger environmental protection policy. Particularly



KANAGAWA



KOCHI



KUMAMOTO



KYOTO



MIE



MIYAGI



MIYAZAKI



NAGANO

U P D A T E

Best Value at Kent County Council

Mr Sugino and Miss Shibata visited Kent County Council recently to find out what issues the authority faces with regard to Best Value, and were kindly welcomed by Ms Sue Garton and Ms Judy Edwards.

Prior to Best Value legislation, Kent CC were already producing plans for their services and issued a 25 year Vision of Kent: this focuses on improvements for services, setting tough targets for education, social services and strategic planning, and strategies for strengthening Kent's local communities. Therefore, the introduction of Best Value – which requires local authorities to produce the same sort of plans for services, has caused little disruption or change to the way Kent CC operates. However, Ms Edwards stipulated that Kent CC would continue to stand by their belief in their own policy of 'same money better service' rather than the Best Value policy of 'same service less money'.

In Japan, Best Value is often perceived as a very positive policy and the way forward to improve service provision and cost effectiveness. It was refreshingly different, therefore, as well as being invaluable to our research, to hear less positive attitudes towards Best Value and to realise it is not necessarily the best all-purpose solution: sometimes local governments have their own better policies and strategies, especially when they are in tune with their citizens and their needs.

U P D A T E

Age Concern in Leicester

To conclude their research on the voluntary sector in the UK, Michiko Saito and Carol Hinvest went to visit Age Concern in Leicester. Age Concern Leicester was formed in 1947 and is a pioneer of the Age Concern organisation. It remained relatively small until the early 80's, when it moved to its current premises at Clarence House and began a period of rapid expansion, overseen by Mr Pat Cusack who joined the group as Executive Director in 1983.

Mr Cusack described some of the services Age Concern provides to the elderly in Leicester, including day care, lunch clubs, home visits, organised activities, and the provision of information and advice. During their visit to Clarence House Michiko and Carol were able to watch a dance, one of the five activities planned for that day including yoga and painting classes. Age Concern Leicester has a budget of £1.6 million, half of which comes from Leicester City Council and the other half mostly from fundraising. One of the ways it raises money, in common with a number of charities in the UK, is running charity shops, and of which there are two in Clarence House itself: a "nearly new" clothes shop and "Victoria's Market" - a small store selling stationery, sweets and small household items. Methods of attracting, recruiting and retaining volunteers is also of importance to Michiko's research, and she was able to put her questions to Mrs Pam Taylor, Volunteer



Director Mr Cusack and Colleagues welcome Michiko to Leicester Age Concern

Coordinator, who manages a team of 500 helpers. Mrs Taylor outlined a variety of methods used to attract new volunteers, such as attending university Freshers' Fairs, advertising and being featured in local media, and poster campaigns. Volunteers are invaluable and thanking them is something Mrs Taylor feels is very important; she does this by organising a number of events each year, including coach trips, parties and ceremonies to present awards and certificates to long serving helpers. Her longest serving volunteer has worked with Age Concern for 28 years!

U P D A T E

Work Placement

Every year, newly arrived Japanese staff spend two weeks at a local authority to experience first hand how a local authority operates. Following are the comments of Ms. Imai and Mr. Yamaguchi, who visited Stockton-on-tees in northeastern England last May.

Stockton-on-tees Borough Council covers a wide variety of areas, from the quiet residential old town of Yarm, to the regenerated but well-preserved old market town of Stockton, and from the industrial area of Billingham - which is undergoing continuous regeneration - to the charming developing residential town of Thornaby. Our work placement was an amazing and informative experience, and we managed to cover almost everything we wanted to find out.



Mayor of Stockton, Mrs Jean O'Donnell welcomes Ms Imai and Mr Yamaguchi to Stockton-on-Tees

The first few days we were treated to an overview of the council, facts and figures, organisation and political structure, and the main issues and challenges facing the authority. From what we gathered, Stockton's main priority seems to be its constant efforts in regeneration. This has borne fruit in attracting industry as well as people who have come to work and live here; indeed Ingleby Barwick is one of the largest residential developments in the country and it still is growing fast! We then concentrated on one or two aspects of the council's work in more detail, looking at inward investment and economic regeneration initiatives, crime control and community safety, public involvement and the strengthening of local democracy. The Town Centre Manager, Geraint Williams, demonstrated how close consultation exercises with local residents and quick action in response to the feedback has successfully contributed to the improvement of the town centre, transforming it into a pleasant place with the widest high street in the country.

We would like to thank everyone at Stockton on Tees for their warm welcome, and for the time and effort they spent on making our placement so worthwhile.

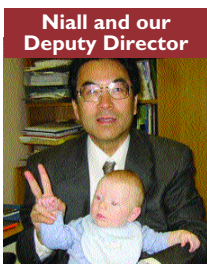


GOODBYE - HELLO



Carol Hinvest

Goodbye We are sad to say goodbye to Carol Hinvest, who left the JLGC in March, to take up a new position as Policy Officer for the Housing Department of the London Borough of Greenwich. Carol spent three and half years guiding her Japanese colleagues in their research projects, and her insights into local government as a former councillor for Tower Hamlets will be sorely missed! Carol has asked us to convey her thanks to all the officers who gave their time to meet her and her colleagues in the course of their research.



Niall and our Deputy Director

We are delighted to announce the birth of Niall to Sarah Johnson, who has worked at JLGC for three years as our administration assistant; though this is tinged with sadness as Sarah and her family will be moving up to Nottingham, where she will be a fulltime mother.

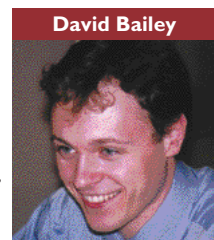
We wish both Sarah and Carol the very best in their futures.



Madelaine Clarke

Hello A warm welcome to Madelaine Clarke, who replaces Sarah as our fulltime administrative assistant. Madelaine spent two years on the JET programme, teaching English to Japanese secondary pupils in Saitama Prefecture. On her return to Britain, she spent some time working for Stevenage Borough Council, in their busy housing department, before joining JLGC.

Former Research and Policy Officer David Bailey also re-joined our team, but on a



David Bailey

part-time temporary basis; David, who left the JLGC 18 months ago to do a PhD at the London School of Economics, helped assist the Japanese staff in their research whilst Jonathan was hard at work supporting the England team in Japan.



Sarah Johnson

As usual every Spring, we also welcomed our new team of Japanese staff, seconded for two years from their respective local authorities:



Masayuki Sugino

Since arriving in London, the thing that has impressed me most is the abundance of large, beautiful parks. All the trees seem to be well-groomed! In Japan, I used to be very lazy and get up late at the weekend. Now I find I always get up early, so I can walk in the parks and enjoy their peaceful atmosphere. The people of London are very lucky to have such an enviable environment, and to be able to enjoy such beautiful views and surroundings in the centre of their town.

1. Ehime Prefecture



Saori Shibata

This is actually my second stay in the U.K. Previously I stayed in Edinburgh as a student. I welcome the opportunity to return and work in London, and hope that this too will be a treasured experience for me. Whilst in London, I am eager to learn about local government systems and have a particular interest in Best Value and external audit systems - policies which Japanese local governments are beginning to introduce and to pay a lot of attention to recently. Therefore, I will try to learn as much as possible, to enjoy London, and to not be afraid of making mistakes.

2. Kumamoto Prefecture

Since arriving in the UK I have noticed that London is a very cosmopolitan city. While travelling on buses and tubes I often hear a variety of languages being spoken. It seems that it is very easy for foreigners to enjoy a London life, and I look forward to finding out why so many foreigners choose to visit and live in London.



Toru Yamaguchi

3. Aomori City

Personally, I am impressed by the number of parks in London, and pleasantly surprised by the lack of rain. Before coming to London I had prepared myself for endless days of wet, miserable weather – but so far I have been lucky (except for today).

My first impression of London is that it is a very exciting city. So despite the chilly weather, by keeping busy exploring London, I find I have no time to feel the cold. As for the office, I am enjoying the challenge of overcoming language difficulties and learning new information. Facing this challenge is very rewarding for me, and I am eager to learn as much as possible about UK local Government, British culture, food and people, during my two years in London.



Yuko Imai

4. Tokyo Metropolitan Government

