

# 万葉

# MYRIAD LEAVES

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

わが恋止まず  
山ざぎの白露しげみ  
うらぶるる心も深く

yama jisa no siratsuyu  
sigemi urabururu kokoro  
mo fukaku waga koi  
yamazu

As a snowbell fair  
Heavy laden with clear dew  
Bends its head,  
So I hang my head  
Heavy laden with deep love



Snow Festival - Aomori City



"Snow Monsters" - Yamagata Prefecture



Mojikoo Station (1914) an important cultural asset - Kitakyushu City

## 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'.

2002/2003

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LETTER FROM A CIR

**1. New Ecological Agenda**

The Ministry of the Environment is currently working on a plan to promote recycling and its legal framework. By 2010, its aims are to:

1. reduce waste by 50%
2. increase cyclical use of resources by 40%
3. increase the resource producing ratio (rpr) by 40%. (the rpr is calculated by dividing the GDP by a factor representing natural resources.)

The ministry is also proposing that residents should reduce their own waste by 20%. In order to do this, the ministry is encouraging a joined up approach involving citizens groups, the voluntary sector and local authorities to work hard at reducing, re-using and recycling. A slick campaign has been run on TV, involving celebrities and a "Zero Disposal" slogan. There is even a dedicated website (in Japanese only) called Re-Style (www.re-style.jp)

Local governments have picked up the challenge, and each has their own approach to collecting recyclable waste. Aomori City, for example, separates its domestic waste into 4 main categories: Burnable Waste, Non-burnable, Large Refuse and Resources. Before putting their rubbish out, residents must comply with the following rules:

- Cans and tins:** empty, wash, dry
- Plastic bottles:** check recycling sign on product (oils and non-food products are burnable waste); otherwise remove cap, wash and squash
- Glass bottles:** (brown and green glass only) remove caps/tops, wash and dry
- Cartons:** wash, cut and flatten, dry (many supermarkets have collection boxes for these)
- Newspapers, cardboard boxes etc:** flatten, tie up with string

Aomori City, in line with some other local authorities, also provide grants for purchases which enable or encourage recycling, such as special buckets for slops.

Since the Electrical Appliance Law came into effect in April 2002, all residents already have to recycle white goods and other electrical appliances. This is done by bringing their refrigerators, dishwashers, TVs, air conditioning units etc to the original shop it was purchased from, which then takes them to the recycling facility. Putting the burden of recycling on the manufacturer/retailer rather than on the consumer has been an effective means of avoiding illegal dumping.

In Kumamoto City, on the southern island of Kyushu, the mayor himself has launched a public appeal on TV to encourage local people to care for their environment and become more aware of ecological issues. The city's efforts, including hosting an international environmental conference, has enabled it to gain ISO recognition; its recycling targets, however, are not being met because too many residents are still not removing tops and caps off glass bottles before disposing of them. It has spent £20,000 over two months on a targeted campaign to encourage people to cooperate and set up a dedicated page on their website.

Osaka City has set up a bureau dedicated to administer waste from business activities, and targets its campaigns for recycling and reducing waste to local businesses. It also operates a consultancy service for professionals such as barristers or accountants. The city has calculated that 54% of its waste is generated by business activities, but that its charge for collecting it is cheaper than other local authorities, so it is also looking at increasing collection charges.

Meanwhile back in Tokyo, Sugunami Ward is tightening its rules on waste disposal, and no doubt to the relief of its residents, has decided to dismantle its waste collecting stations, which are thought to be the cause of "Sugunami Sickness", by 2012. "Sugunami Sickness" is a series of symptoms ranging from hormonal imbalances, to headaches and slurred speech, to high percentages of toxic substances such as arsenic, lead or mercury in the bloodstream, which affect over 400 residents of Sugunami Ward living near one of the waste transfer stations, and thought to be

triggered by over exposure to deadly toxins, such as dioxin, released by the waste plants. By introducing measures such as enforcing domestic waste separation, and setting up plastic bottle collections points at schools, they hope to reduce domestic waste by 40% and all waste by 60%.

Chiyoda Ku is concerned about its footpaths, and has recently introduced a bylaw fining smokers £10.00 for dropping ash and cigarette butts on the pavement. This has already proven to be very effective and other authorities, such as Fukuoka City are already following suit.

**2. Reform Ideas of the Enterprise Zone**

The headquarters of the office managing improvements to Enterprise Zones, headed by Prime Minister Koizumi, closed its date for applications for submission of ideas at the end of January.

Being an Enterprise Zone is a special status conferred on application by the Prime Minister to local governments or private companies, whereby some of the laws and regulations which govern them are lifted or amended within a specific area, in order to contribute to the economic development of their region or to the solving of various kinds of social or economical problems. At the end of January, the second round of applications had yielded 651 ideas from local governments and private companies, some of them unique and innovative, and which could trigger an improvement in the country's economic stalemate.

Let us have a look at some of these projects: Hokkaido Government wants to set up an "Agriculture Improvement Zone", in which they can redevelop agricultural lands for a new scheme, using them to build commercial property such as hotels or restaurants. The current law makes it difficult to convert agricultural lands for new uses without the government's approval. Hokkaido has a surplus of agricultural land and wants to make the best use of it.

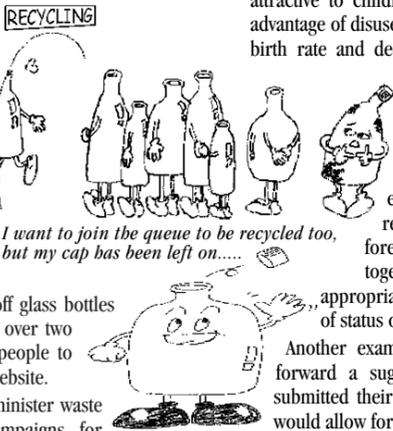
Many proposals concerned education. Hachioji City, in Tokyo, wants to set up an Education Enterprise Zone in certain schools: their idea is to target children who refuse to go to elementary schools or junior high schools. The mayor of the Hachioji City says the city is experiencing a worrying increase in the number of children who do not go to school. Japanese schools are governed by strict regulations and cannot do anything beyond that dictated by the national curriculum; a school which contravenes regulations sees itself punished by not being allocated proper resources, such as teachers. By applying for certain schools to become Enterprise Zones, he hopes to be able to avoid these regulations and introduce subjects, activities and so on which would make school attractive to children who hesitate or refuse to go. He plans to take advantage of disused schools, since they are increasing in line with the low birth rate and decreasing demands for school places. The mayor has strongly recommended that each region create a better and original environment for education.

Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, which has the highest number of 2nd or 3rd generation Brazilians in the country, is applying for deregulation regarding education, social security and registration of foreign residents. They would like to create a region in which foreigners and residents in Hamamatsu city can live together naturally and foreign children can study at the appropriate school for their educational proficiencies regardless of status or nationality.

Another example is of a local authority and a university putting forward a suggestion together. Tokai University and Isehara City submitted their idea to introduce an Enterprise Zone together which would allow foreign doctors to practice and prescribe.

Private companies have also come up with some unique ideas. For example, Mitsubishi Jisho is proposing to make an Enterprise Zone in the development area near Narita airport and turn it into an exchange crossroads or an international school for Japanese and foreign research workers. They are requesting deregulations which would make it easier for foreign researchers to get a residential qualification, and which would allow flexible school management by joint-stock companies.

The first Enterprise Zone will be announced this summer. There has been opposition to some of the submitted projects by stakeholders with personal interests, or other ministries concerned; but there is hope that central government will not waste these innovative ideas, which show the will, if not a real potential to revitalise both the Japanese economy and society. Ultimately, however, the decision lies with the Prime Minister, Mr Koizumi.



*This is the first in a new series which introduces the work of current Coordinator of International Relations (CIR). CIRs are JET programme participants who have been selected to work in a Japanese local authority for a period of 1 to 3 years, to assist that authority in its international affairs. For further information on CIRs and the JET programme in general, please contact the JLGC.*

**"Englishman in... Yamagata Prefecture"**

**by Benjamin Lorimer, Yuza-machi Board of Education, CIR**

Wasn't it Sting who sang "I'm a legal alien, I'm an Englishman in New York?" He should have tried Yamagata. On arriving in August 2002, I was aware that many Japanese knew little, if anything about the "mountain-shaped prefecture." Most, if not all, those I spoke to said, "isn't it in Tohoku? You can buy a mountain for a penny up there..." So as you might imagine, I was expecting the role of a Coordinator for International Relations in a small, rural, Yamagata farming town to be something equating the role of a Japanese CIR in Emmerdale Farm. But like most things in Japan, I found that what you least expect is just around the corner.

Lying on the south-western tip of Tohoku region, the prefecture itself boasts – as the name might suggest – unrivalled mountain landscapes, crowned to the east by Mount Zao, with the "Okama" crater lake at the summit, famous for changing colour several times each day, and Tohoku's best winter sports facilities. Unbelievably, only some 30% of the prefecture lies on level plains. The Mogami River runs from south to north-west and joins the Japan Sea coast at Sakata. Once a flourishing lifeline for prefectural transportation, the Mogami is revered, and known by local people as the "mother river." Along the banks of the Mogami and out to the Japan sea spreads the Shonai plain, which constitutes one of Yamagata's four provinces – Shonai. This region is home to one of the most famous historical features of the prefecture. The "Dewa Sanzan" (Three Dewa Mountains) of Haguro-san, Yudono-san, and Gassan are not only visible from most places in the prefecture, but are also the birthplace of a unique form of mountain worship, which was founded on Mt. Haguro some 1,400 years ago. The Haguro Shugendo sect lined the path of Haguro-san from foot to peak with 2,446 steps leading to a shrine at the top, all designated national monuments; its five storied pagoda and spectacular cedar trees are also all national treasures. Gassan is also the only mountain where it's possible to go for a swim in the summer and to ski home!

On the Akita prefectural border in the North, lies a prefectural enigma. Mt. Chokai, standing at 2,336m, is known by locals as "Dewa Fuji" because of its striking resemblance to its moody cousin to the south of Tokyo. It is arguably the most beautiful view in Tohoku, with its gently sloped base flowing into the Japan Sea. From the peak, there are unrivalled views of the Japan Sea coast,

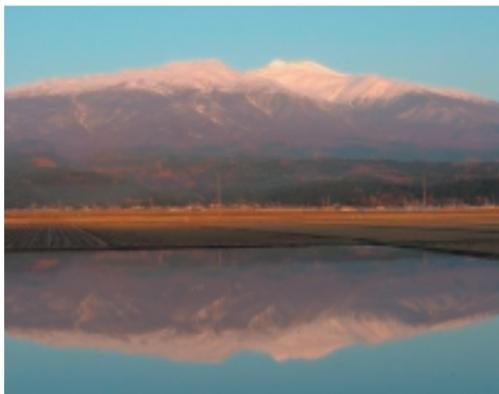
the Shonai plain, Tobishima – an island which lies just out to sea from the foot of Mt. Chokai – and the breathtaking Ichino and Nino gorges. Mt. Chokai is the perfect view from one's bedroom and bathroom windows, and how grateful I am that it's my bathroom and bedroom window frames which afford picture perfect sunsets, a (currently) snow capped peak, and autumn leaves to shame the more famous maple trees of Kyoto and Nikko.

The municipality which is lucky enough to claim ownership of Mt Chokai – and not without protest from neighbouring Akita Prefecture – is Yuza. A small, sleepy agricultural town in the north-west, wedged between the foot of Chokai and the Japan sea, and 18km from the Akita border to the north. Soon after I arrived, I realised

the importance of the ownership of Mt. Chokai, in a border contest. This is something I don't believe exists anywhere in Japan, or indeed, in the world. Our neighbouring town of Kisakata, in Akita, has long disputed the border between the two towns, partly, I am told, because they still believe Chokai belongs to them. So every year, a tug of war, called the "Misaki-yama Kunitori Gassen" is held across the borderline. Subsequently, each year, the actual border between Yamagata and Akita changes depending on the strength of the relevant teams...

Whilst Yuza is only a small town, it has a surprisingly advanced policy towards international relations. For example, we have been twinned with Szolnok, Hungary for around 20 years, which started as a result of a visiting folk dance troupe. In terms of the UK, we have been twinned with Stratford-upon-Avon for around a decade (apparently one of the anecdotal reasons Stratford was chosen is because the word "apon" means "bath" in Yuza dialect!) Yuza and Stratford delegates have been visiting each other ever since, and part of my role as Yuza's CIR is teaching an advanced English conversation course to the "hakendan" or delegation from Yuza to Stratford. Unusually for such a small place, Yuza's 18,000 strong population has had foreign residents for some 10 years now, and regular visits to the six local elementary schools have been the main focus of the Yuza CIR's work for the best part of 8 years.

Another surprising angle to our town is the excitement of all involved in any new internationalisation project – even the non-residents! Recently, one of my elementary schools, Inagawa



Mt. Chokai reflected in rice field



Yuza-Kisakata tug of war

## LETTER FROM A CIR

Shogakko, has managed to set up a sister-school link with St. Benedicts RC Primary in Garforth, Leeds. Presently, the Inagawa 6th years are writing letters in English, practising their pen-friends' names in Japanese calligraphy, and munching on a batch of Snowman marshmallows that their friends in Leeds have sent them! This newest exchange will, I hope, serve as a springboard. With the remaining five schools voicing an interest in similar projects, I am currently trying to contact as many LEAs in the UK as the internet will permit.

The six schools I do visit are not even comparable to British schools, however. Blitzed from top-to-bottom by the children every lunchtime, even the 120 year-old schools sparkle like new pins. Lunch, whilst served in aluminium buckets and trays, brings no memories of my own schools meals, for which I am grateful. All ingredients are made in either Yuza itself, or Yamagata Prefecture, and each meal is prepared from fresh deliveries every day. The children even make annual visits to the cows that provide the milk for lunchtimes.

Whilst on the one hand, this is an incredibly advanced community in terms of "internationalisation", (I recently heard we are the

only "town" in Yamagata Prefecture connected to the ADSL telecommunications network) it is still very much a grass-roots community. The children are on first name terms with everybody, including their teachers, because everybody knows everybody else. Whilst that has its downsides, (believe me, people know where I've been before I do) you have to wonder if this is not the catalyst to compel the town into its almost hyperactive internationalisation policy.

The snow has set in, the kerosene fumes from the small heaters which take the place of central heating in Japan and the constant aroma of hot noodles and "onsen" spa complexes around town are

making winter life in Yuza extremely enjoyable. The views of the "Juroku Rakan" (Sixteen Stone Buddhas) on the Japan Sea coast at Fukura in Yuza are breathtaking in the winter sun, and the warm and friendly nature of Yuza people make this a very special place. There is so much left to say about Yuza, Yamagata and Tohoku, but the best way to finish is to say, however short your flying visit to Japan, whatever season you choose to visit, a brief look at Yamagata Prefecture will impress even the half-day tripper.



School corridor, beautifully polished by the children

## VIEWPOINT

### Reflections on Japan - Study Tour 2002

Sue Smith, Deputy Chief Executive, Lichfield District Council

My interest in Japan had been aroused in 2001 when we appointed a new member of staff who had recently returned from a twelve-month stint working in Tokyo. Through listening to Paul, I began to acquire a fascination for the people, the culture and the country. This was reinforced, as it probably was for many of us, by the media coverage of the football world cup. So by the time I saw the advert in the Local Government Chronicle for participants to join a study tour of Japan, I thought Christmas had arrived early. I sent in the required 1,000 words of "why I should go" and sat back and waited.

A large white envelope with Japan Local Government Centre stamped on it arrived in my post in August. Apparently I went white as I opened it. The size of the package indicated that it was far more than a rejection letter but that I must have been accepted. That was a daunting moment and one in which I can remember thinking, "what on earth have I let myself in for". What I did not appreciate at that time was that it would be a trip of a lifetime. There was no question about whether to accept the place; within hours I was on the telephone to the travel agents to arrange my flight. Next, I bought a publication by Rex Shelley, "Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette". This became my bible. Although I did make an attempt to learn rudimentary aspects of the language including having a CD in my car, my lack of talent for foreign languages thwarted this so I focused my efforts on reading and learning about etiquette and culture. I was coached in the art of presenting my business card and by the time I went I considered myself to be an expert, but more about that later.

The study tour was scheduled for October 18th – 29th. Two weeks

before, the participants gathered at the JLGC in London for a briefing and to meet each other and JLGC staff. Eleven people from the UK were going, nine of whom worked for local authorities, one from the Local Government International Bureau and the Editor of the Local Government Chronicle. The briefing provided a detailed insight into the programme for the tour and also guidance on what gifts to take and what to expect when we were with the homestay families.

With a huge sense of anticipation, October 18th finally arrived. After an overnight flight to Narita airport just outside Tokyo, I was met by representatives from CLAIR and by one of the other participants, Kevin Morris, who had arrived on an earlier flight. Kevin and I travelled to Tokyo together and even at this early stage we were impressed with the high standard of customer service that was evident and indeed which became a significant feature of our stay in Japan.

We spent the first five days in Tokyo, alongside representatives from fifteen other countries who were all in Japan for the same reason as us. This provided a wonderful opportunity to network and to discuss common issues affecting local government across the globe. Our first full day in Tokyo was spent on a sight seeing tour of the city, which gave most of us our first exposure to Japan. Two of our party had spent time in Japan previously, as participants on the JET programme. I had not been further east than Greece, so for me it was an entirely new experience. Tokyo is an amazing city. We only saw glimpses of what was on offer, but it was clear to all of us that it was a city of contrasts, with huge high rise hotels and office blocks sitting alongside ancient temples.

## VIEWPOINT

The following day brought the start of the two day Local Government International Exchange Seminar which we would attend along with the delegates from the other overseas countries and also representatives from local authorities within Japan. Two of our party, Rachel Roberts from the LGIB and myself, had been asked to give presentations and my role involved taking part in a panel discussion on the subject of "How communities should respond to changing events at international level". My paper was based on the need for communities to work together to produce a plan promoting the wellbeing of the community, along the lines of the relatively new statutory requirement in the UK for all local authorities to produce a community strategy.

The end of the conference also signaled the time to leave Tokyo and whilst regretting not being able to spend more time in the city, I couldn't wait to go on the bullet train which was to be our form of transport to our next destination, Shiga. The journey on the bullet train lived up to my expectations; it was incredibly smooth whilst being deceptively fast. I would admit, however, to being challenged by trying to use the Japanese style toilet on a moving train! Thank Heavens that there was also a Western alternative available!

We finally arrived in Otsu, which was to be our base for the second part of the tour. It is the administrative base for the Shiga Prefecture, which is a local authority comparable in size and function to a county council. As we left the railway station, we did notice that our hosts who had come to greet us were taking photos of our arrival. What we did not realise was that one of the photographers was from the local television company and that coverage of our visit including our first meeting was shown on a news programme.

Shiga Prefecture is responsible for an area that is dominated by Lake Biwa. Over the next few days, we learnt about the workings of local authorities at different levels within Japan and also about current issues in environmental management. We visited Nagahama City to see a town regeneration scheme and also enjoyed many of the visitor attractions that the area had to offer. Part way through this second part of the study tour came what for most of us was going to be the most challenging but potentially the most rewarding part of the visit, spending the weekend with a Japanese family. Peter Dowd and myself stayed with the Fujiwara family, who lived in Kusatsu City within Shiga Prefecture. We experienced a "typical" weekend in their home, which provided a welcome break from the intercontinental style hotels that had been our base since our arrival in Japan. We ate traditional Japanese food sitting on the floor, learnt how to dress in a kimono, slept on futons and along with what seemed like most of the local population, spent Saturday evening at the public baths.

On the second day of the homestay, we went to Kyoto and visited

temples, the old Imperial Palace and Kyoto railway station, which is the most incredible example of modern architecture that I have seen. I wish that we could have spent more time in Kyoto. I was so impressed with the city and the people, and fascinated by the history of the area. However, it was time to say our farewells to the Fujiwara's and return to the hotel for the final part of the tour.

On the last day we visited Kojia Town, which is a reconstructed Ninja settlement. What brilliant stress relief to run around in bright pink Ninja outfits practising the skills that would have been necessary for survival many centuries ago. Beats paintballing hands down!

During our stay, I had prided myself on my understanding of the Japanese etiquette if not the language, however I

was about to let myself down! On the first night at our hotel in Otsu, I went up to the Head Barman to present him with my business card. I put my hand in my handbag, took out and presented him with what I thought was my business card with two hands as I had learnt. Only upon noticing his embarrassed reaction to this did I realise that I had actually presented him with the key card to my room! Never mind, I had done well up to then and it provided some amusement for our group and probably for the hotel staff too.

Eventually the last day arrived and we all said our farewells, some of us to return to the UK whilst others were extending their stay in Japan.

I had high expectations of the study tour and of Japan before I left England. They were met and exceeded. I was overwhelmed by the hospitality and generosity of the Japanese. Their attention to detail and cleanliness was flawless. The food however was challenging, but I coped, although I do admit to having taken an emergency supply of high energy sports bars and flapjacks just in case! On my return to the UK I felt very humble and privileged to have been able to join such a tour and to visit Japan. I will be going back. The Fujiwara's have invited me to stay with them again and I would love to see other parts of the country and to be able to spend more time in Kyoto. During the tour, I also made contacts with people from other countries and I am looking forward to seeing them again too. In fact,

as a result of these contacts, I will be receiving a delegation from Shenyang in China in February and hopefully will be going there in the summer. I have also planned a trip to Boston, USA, in the autumn and will be catching up with one of the US delegates who is based there.

I will never forget this study tour and what I have learnt about Japan and local government issues around the world. It was definitely a trip of a lifetime. Now I need to arrange my next visit to Japan...



UK delegation at Lake Biwa (photo: Richard Vize, LGC)



Sue Smith at Enryaku-ji Temple complex, Mt.Hiei (photo: Richard Vize, LGC)

In this issue we focus on two overseas training activities which we support, and look at the experience gained by Ms Machiko Ohta, from Kitakyushu City, and Mr Takehito Saito, from Yamagata Prefecture, during their short stay in the UK.

..... U P D A T E .....

**Overseas Research Programme,  
by Machiko Ohta**

I was lucky to be successful in my application for the public selection of the overseas researcher post for Kitakyushu City. The selected applicant organises his or her own research and sets up everything before departure – with hindsight a very difficult yet ultimately rewarding task.

Pick up any article or publication on Japanese local government these days and one comes across the topic of Public Participation and its vital importance. The City of Kitakyushu also has a policy of encouraging public participation, but at the moment, it seems limited to specific areas of local administration, and I have certainly never been aware of any public involvement in any area of work I have done.

Some time ago I heard that the British system of parishes was held as a paragon of local democracy as the closest form of local government to the people it serves, so I decided to make the parish system my topic for research. I studied the homepages of various parishes before settling on Banbury Town Council, a relatively large and recently established (2000) authority, with a population of 46,000. The JLGC kindly made the appointments on my behalf.

I had intended to spend my month's research focusing on Banbury TC, but realised that however large the parish, there would not be enough material to warrant a month's stay. So on the advice of JLGC I also looked at the relationships and interactions between Banbury and its District Council of Cherwell, (the equivalent of the 2nd tier of municipalities in Japan) and Oxfordshire County Council (the closest equivalent to our upper tier of prefectures). In total, together with visits to other parishes including Shoreham, I was able to spend a full month gathering information.

**1. What are the residents' attitudes towards their parish council?**

When I first arrived in Banbury I had the chance to talk to local residents, but from their conversations got the feeling they didn't feel particularly strongly about their parish council. Two days later, when a parish council meeting was held, only one member of the public turned up. I suppose this cannot be construed as a reflection of the local people's feelings towards their parish but I had expected a larger turn-out. Yet thanks to the meeting, I was able to meet the one person who came, Mr Hortin, and ask him some questions. He said that now that Banbury had a parish council it had made it easier for him to express his views. Before that he had to get in touch with either the district or county council, which he had found complicated and inconvenient.



Together with staff at Banbury Town Council

However, he also had some criticism: parish councillors, as others, are elected, but one of them had been appointed and not elected to the council. He explained that if a council is short of a councillor for some reason, other councillors can appoint someone without having to call an election. Mr Hortin did not recognise this person as a legitimate representative of the residents.

Banbury is not the only place where this happens: when an appointed member of Shoreham Parish tried to cast his vote after a parish council debate, he was heckled as not being a duly elected representative. These incidents made me realise how important it was to the British public that their councillors should be elected.

**2. The powers of a parish:**

I spent four days at Banbury Town Council studying the role, responsibilities and assets of the parish, and was able to

visit the allotments, parks, football pitches, cemeteries and other facilities which it oversees. It seemed to me that running these facilities were its main function apart from holding its council meetings, and somehow felt out of proportion with the large population which it served. When I asked the Town Clerk what responsibility he would like to have had most, he replied: "we would like to be in charge of regulating parking in the parish, and of the market which is held every Thursday and Saturday behind the town hall; but these are income generating activities so the District Council, which currently overseas them, is not likely to hand them over to us; they were also set up and run by the District before the Town Council was established." Over in Shoreham, a problem connected with dual taxation prevented the parish from increasing its powers. I felt as though despite parish councils being legally entitled to carry out a variety of services, in fact, their powers were limited and restricted.



Ms Ohta tries on the ceremonial robes at Banbury Town Council

**3. Parish councils as a legitimate form of local government**

When I first heard about parish councils I wondered how much the councillors or town clerks actually knew about local government - were they simply amateurs? Were those who got involved simply in possession of a larger ego than those who did not? In fact my doubts were unfounded; those I met knew a lot about local government; and district councils seem to organise regular seminars and training sessions for town clerks, and national and county level conferences also put a lot of effort into catering for parishes in their sessions. I asked the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, Mr Keith Mitchell, who is also a parish councillor, what he thought were the necessary qualities for a parish clerk. He replied "the person needs to be sociable, knowledgeable about local government, and computer literate, I think." All the parish councillors I interviewed agreed that their main duty was to support their clerk.

And what do the officers of district and county councils think about parishes? I found out that local parishes are always consulted, in every policy they formulate. There must be cases where there is opposition from parishes, I thought; how do officers react to this? "When we elaborate plans and policies, there are cases where parishes will raise objections. We discuss the issues with them, get them to see our point of view and amend ours where necessary. I would say that on the whole, our relationship with parishes is very good" was the frequent answer; but it was also noted that "Banbury Parish Council does have quite an aggressive approach; even if we get approval from other parishes, we can usually expect some form of objection from Banbury". I came across this several times during my research: it seems that from the point of view of districts or counties, there are difficulties in coping with large town councils.

At the end of January, the national press announced that the Ministry of General Affairs was considering establishing a lower tier of government to represent and communicate more effectively with local residents. There is a lot to learn from the British example, and I hope our local authorities will be successful in adapting the lessons learnt for effective cooperation with their residents. I owe a debt of gratitude to all the people I met in the UK, who shared their knowledge and experience with me, to those at Yokkaichi University, especially Ms Matsui, and Messrs Takeshita and Inazawa, who helped me prepare my research trip, and to my colleagues at Kitakyushu City, who covered for me during my absence. Thank you.

..... U P D A T E .....

**Short Term Trainee Programme,  
by Takehito Saito**

As I sit on the plane returning to Japan at the end of my three month training programme, I think back on my European experience: English tuition in Bournemouth, public administration course at Birmingham University, work placement in Cardiff, and local authority visits in France. My memories of the warm welcome I received everywhere, experience both professional and personal are mixed with a sadness at having to leave. I have gained a tremendous amount over the last three months, from a work point of view, of course, but also as a human being,

The UK to me as always meant the Premier League, St Andrews and Ascot, all symbolic of big sporting events and nothing whatsoever to do with local government. My first surprise was to find out that most local government officers in this country are specialists in their field, and that lifelong employment is a rarity. This to me was a fundamental difference between the UK and Japan. Some



Mr Saito and the short-term trainee group visiting Henley-in-Arden

of my Japanese local government officer colleagues would no doubt be envious of such a system, but in my view, if it were introduced back home, with positions advertised and awarded on merit and experience, many current officers would be left without a job. I had many opportunities to discuss this issue whilst I was in the UK, and I remember someone at Cardiff CC pointing out the advantages of the Japanese system: "through the Japanese system, one gains a wide range of experience; one can

become stale if one is continually doing the same thing". My research topic during my course was partnerships; this has become an important concept in Japanese local government and certainly essential to my work. The viewpoint of partnerships is positive, but where I think there is a misconception about them in Japan, in that we think of a partnership as something one can simply set up, whereas it tends to be the result of a process of osmosis, and not something one can simply create. Whenever I asked, that was the word which cropped up, and without partnerships, even obtaining budgets was difficult. I wish now that I had asked more probing questions such as how they have come about, their historical, political and economic background, advantages and disadvantages, and residents' involvement rather than just accepting the fact that they happen. I also looked at the issue from a democratic point of view: unsanctioned partnerships rather than democratically elected councillors were making decisions, thus denying residents a direct involvement in policy making. Yet, democracy is all about residents governing their own land with their own hands, and indirect democracy will hopefully reactivate real democracy.

In my current job, I realise that cooperation and communication between government and people in Japan have only just begun, and there is not much awareness of it at either government or people levels. Furthermore, the tremendous resources of residents organisations, their people, experience and capabilities, are ignored. I see my role from now on as encouraging cooperation between the two, as well as supporting residents associations to develop and become more involved in local governance.

Personal memories of my stay also remain very strong, especially during my time spent in Cardiff. Cardiff, the capital of Wales and important port, has been experiencing remarkable regeneration since the decline of the coal industry. During my placement, I did a homestay with a local government officer whose family looked after me as one of their own, and fed me very well. I was also able to participate in the filming of a promotional video organised by CLAIR (Tokyo), and my first few days in Cardiff were duly recorded. It seemed that everywhere I went, I was followed by a camera and a microphone, and both my host authority and myself were surprised. But I daresay it went well, and that my experience in Cardiff will encourage other

officers to participate in the trainee programme. I could not possibly begin to understand everything about British local government in just three months, but the opportunity to become acquainted with the way a different system has evolved within a different historical and cultural context from Japan has been an invaluable lesson. As always when one goes abroad, it is a trigger to understand one's own system better,

what and why are the differences and it is an important, if sometimes exhausting intellectual exercise. As far as I am concerned, the three months I spent on the programme were a precious experience and I feel refreshed and able to tackle my work with a new perspective on things. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to Cardiff CC, to the INLOGOV lecturers and English teachers for priceless lessons learnt and the help and warm welcome you all extended me.

## HELLO - GOODBYE



AICHI



AKITA



AOMORI



CHIBA



EHIME



FUKUI



FUKUOKA



FUKUSHIMA



GIFU



## HELLO

*We welcome the latest member of our team***Irmelind Kirchner - Research and Policy Officer**

After graduating in Japanese from Bonn University in Germany, I spent six years working in Japan. The last three were with CLAIR's Tokyo office, dealing mainly with twinning and sister city issues, training programmes and conferences for local government representatives as well as representing CLAIR at international conferences and meetings. After leaving Japan, I completed a MA in Local Governance at the

Institute of Local Government Studies in Birmingham. My special interest in the local government field lies in international co-operation (municipal international co-operation or decentralised development co-operation), as well as in political arrangements and new democratic practices. I am also a keen environmentalist and hope to see local authorities in this country become more active in pursuing green policies!

## GOODBYE

*Before bidding farewell to our second year staff, we asked them to comment on their experiences of the UK.***Jonathan Mackay - Research Co-ordinator**

I have worked with some great people over the past two years, who I hope have also become good and lifelong friends. I have also learnt a lot about Japan, a country which was largely a mystery to me before I began the job. Admittedly, the Japanese way of doing things is still at times rather mysterious to me but working at the Centre has definitely been a fascinating learning curve. I now

move on to a new challenge working as a researcher for the National Audit Office, where I will be studying government policy in the fields of culture, media and sport and hope to be able to impress my new colleagues with my Japanese language skills!!

**Madelaine Clarke****Secretary and Research Assistant**

I joined JLGC after two years on the JET Programme, and one year later am retracing my steps and heading back to a life of teaching in Japan. Working at JLGC has been rewarding and has totally encouraged me to pursue my interest in Japan. I shall miss London and all at JLGC who have made my last year so enjoyable.

**Hirokazu Kimura**

During my term here I was very fortunate to be able to enjoy the many celebrations and events for the Golden Jubilee, which are great memories to take back to Japan. However, what I shall miss most about my London life is being able to enjoy bold, dramatic performances at the English National Opera, the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, and beautiful ballerinas and the atmosphere of Covent Garden. When not in the ENO audience, as Deputy Director

I have been learning about the importance of the philosophy of partnership within public administration, and the concept of devolution, as in the Scottish Parliament. This could be most useful for Japan in the near future. Therefore I return with these ideas in mind, and set out to be more democratic.

**Kiyohide Suzuki**

Over the last two years, the most important thing I have learnt is to keep my temper. This was very important for my London life, especially when I had to wait for a delayed bus or a unexpectedly cancelled train. On the other hand, everyone I have met in UK has endured listening to my bad English with great patience - so I thank you very much! My London days have also highlighted the fact that people should make time for their private life. I paid attention to this and derived a feeling of satisfaction both in private time and working time. However, the thing I shall miss most on returning to Japan is eating fish and chips in winter, and drinking Pimms in summer. At work, the subject of my research is local government in Germany. My report has not been completed yet, but the process of researching was very satisfying and I hope to finish writing the report soon!

**Toshihisa Hasegawa**

My best memory of the last two years has to be when the governor of Shizuoka Prefecture exchanged a Memorandum of Understanding with the chairman of West Midlands Local Government Association. I felt extremely honoured to attend this historical ceremony, and see the relationship between us continue to grow. During my two years I have also had the opportunity to visit many local authorities and have always been impressed by the high degree of politeness and hospitality I came across; I am grateful for all their assistance with my research and for providing me with the information and materials I needed. I hope I will be able to show the same hospitality to UK visitors in Japan. I feel very relieved to have finished my research report. Drafting such a lengthy report was good experience, and my report must be the first one about Irish local government system written in Japanese. I hope people in Japan will be as interested in it as I am proud of it. Personally, living in London with my wife and my son, we will take home many valuable and treasured memories.

**Tatsuya Hitomi**

During the last two years I have visited many European cities to satisfy my personal interest of European history and culture, and also to learn about the tourism industry. On these travels I came to notice how most Europeans seem to have pride and a fondness for their own cultures and towns. This deeply impressed me, and am disappointed that this is not always the case in Japan - even for those involved directly in the tourism industry. So after returning home, I would like to share my experience of Europeans' pride and fondness of their hometowns to many people, especially my colleagues and residents in Nara.

**Yoshifumi Maruo**

I was seconded from Yokosuka City and Medway is one of our twin towns. This meant I had a lot of great opportunities to work with the mayor, councillors and staff of Medway on behalf of Yokosuka City, which has been one of my precious experiences during my two years here. Outside work, I attended evening classes at a business college, which was a linguistic challenge! I also enjoyed making many friends with students from other European and Asian countries. Along with working in a London office, this has helped me improve my negotiation and research skills. My English listening skills have also definitely improved. To be honest, when I first came to the London office I was pretending I could understand what everybody said to me - sorry! My research topic was "local e-government in the UK": an essential policy to modernise the government services and integrate all services, and I hope my research report will help point Japan in the right direction to implement e-government by the end of 2003. Overall I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here, and among many things shall really miss my flat in Camden, double-decker buses, relationships with staff here and friends.



## JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTRE • LONDON

15 WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2DD TELEPHONE: 020 7839 8500 FAX: 020 7839 8191 [www.jlgc.org.uk](http://www.jlgc.org.uk)*The JLGC is the UK office of CLAIR - 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.*