

## JSPS Fellow's Experience

Fellow: Alan Scarlett  
Email: alan.scarlett@plym.ac.uk  
Host: Professor Atsushi Ishimatsu  
Host Institution: Institute for East China Sea Research

I undertook a two month JSPS Short-term Post-doctoral Fellowship with Professor Atsushi Ishimatsu at the Institute for East China Sea Research which is part of Nagasaki University in Kyushu. The Institute is located on the coast and has 'wet laboratories' with seawater provided. This is ideal for the type of measurements I was using to assess the health of marine mussels and seagrasses. This aspect of the research will compliment the findings from detailed analysis of the organic contaminants that may be found within the tissues of the organisms collected. Although it was necessary to ship over some specialist instruments, the essential infrastructure was in place to allow experiments to begin within days of arrival. This is crucial when undertaking such a short-term fellowship. Prof Ishimatsu's team also helped to get me started in the laboratory and to sort out my accommodation. In particular, Dr Awantha Dissanayake provided a great deal of assistance including language translation. Although all of the researchers mentioned herein have excellent command of English, very few of the Japanese public (at least in the areas I travelled) speak English. It is therefore essential to learn as much Japanese as possible before commencing the fellowship.

Japanese bureaucracy can be a problem and I was informed that it could take over a year to obtain permission to deploy some sampling devices in the sea. However, thanks to the perseverance of Prof Ishimatsu, locations were found that required only local permissions. Another researcher at the Institute, Dr Greg Nishihara, took two days out of his busy schedule to take me down to Kagoshima in the south of Kyushu. Here, Ryuta Terada of the Faculty of Fisheries, dived for mussels and seagrasses for me in Kagoshima Bay (see Plate 1). Without this local knowledge and assistance I would have returned to Nagasaki empty handed. During my stay in Japan I was also able to attend the International Symposium on the Sustainability and Productivity of Coastal Resources, held at Nagasaki University. This facilitated many useful contacts including researchers in Okinawa that later helped with locating seagrass beds.

As well as collecting biota and assessing their health, it was also important to establish contact with potential collaborators for future research projects. Prof Takeshi Nakano of Kobe University invited me to present a talk at a seminar at Osaka University and very kindly organised my accommodation and pre and post seminar informal discussions i.e. excellent local food and drinks (see Plate 2). Similarly, Prof Koyama of Kagoshima University, invited me to present my groups' research and we

enjoyed a great night out afterwards. Hosts like to take their visitors to excellent restaurants that specialise in cuisine that some people may find unusual, e.g. chicken sashimi (raw chicken). If you are not prepared to try these foods, Japan might not be to your taste. For the record, the chicken sashimi was excellent and did not result in any unwanted side effects.

Although, I had only two months in Japan, I managed to pack in a lot of experiences. I was lucky enough to time my visit to see the Chinese lantern festival in Nagasaki but unfortunately left before the start of the Sakura. My fellowship ended just as the big earthquake and tsunamis hit Japan and I flew out on the following Sunday. Nagasaki was not affected but it felt very strange to be leaving Japan when so little was known about what was happening and, at the airport, I was desperate to obtain a wifi signal and a news report. If I had the opportunity to return, even with the prospect of more quakes and radiation leaks, I certainly would.

Plate 1 Legend: Greg Nishihara (holding umbrella) and Ryuta Terada collected samples in Kagoshima Bay.



Plate 2 Legend: Prof Takeshi Nakano and Dr Motoharu Suzuki at a speciality Kobe beef restaurant.

