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Host: Prof. Hiroki Oshio, Graduate School of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of Tsukuba

During the 2011 JSPS Summer Programme, I was fortunate to be able to work under Prof. Hiroki Oshio at the Graduate School for Pure and Applied Sciences in the University of Tsukuba. The main aim of my project was to build on the work I had undertaken in my own lab at the University of Glasgow involving the synthesis of a series of lanthanide substituted polyoxometalate complexes which were hoped to possess interesting electronic and magnetic properties. Over the course of the programme I was able to make use of the excellent facilities and wealth of expertise available in the Oshio group in order to make great inroads into the characterisation of my compounds, in particular gaining invaluable experience of performing SQUID (magnetism) and CV (cyclic voltammetry) measurements.

My experience of living in Tsukuba was a very enjoyable one and I would happily return given the opportunity. Tsukuba itself is a small but modern city; I believe the majority of which was built up around the sprawling University in the 70s to provide a centre of excellence for Japanese science. It is a quiet town but there are many and varied shops, cafes, restaurants and bars to enjoy – all of which can be reached reasonably easily by bicycle (I would strongly recommend hiring a bike to anyone staying in Tsukuba). For those people looking for a little more hustle and bustle however, the Tsukuba Express is an excellent train service that runs between the centre of Tsukuba and the electronics district in Tokyo, Akihabara, from which the rest of Tokyo (and most of Japan) is easily accessible.

I really loved my time working in Japan and I believe that I have been able to learn as much about Japanese culture as I have about my own area of research, chemistry. The best advice I think I can give to prospective fellows – particularly those on the summer programme – is to try and find a good balance between work and 'play'. The Japanese work ethic can at times seem somewhat overwhelming to foreign students (it certainly did to me!) but I would encourage everyone to do their best to get out of the lab/office and take this excellent opportunity to see Japan and to enjoy the hospitality and culture of the Japanese people – it really is an incredible country! Lastly; try everything once (except '*natto*'), never be afraid to make a fool of yourself (you will, repeatedly) and most important of all, talk to your Japanese friends and colleagues – they are a treasure trove of amazing information and advice and some of my best times in Japan were spent in their company.

I would like to offer my special thanks to JSPS and the British Council for their support and for allowing me this once-in-a-lifetime experience, but in particular I wish to thank Prof. Oshio and his lab for their hospitality, support and friendship. To all prospective fellows I simply wish you an amazing and successful trip. *Gambatte!*

Jamie Cameron

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With my wonderful host family, the Sasayamas, outside their home in Yokosuka



At the Buddhist temple, Yakuōin Yūkiji, on Mt. Takao